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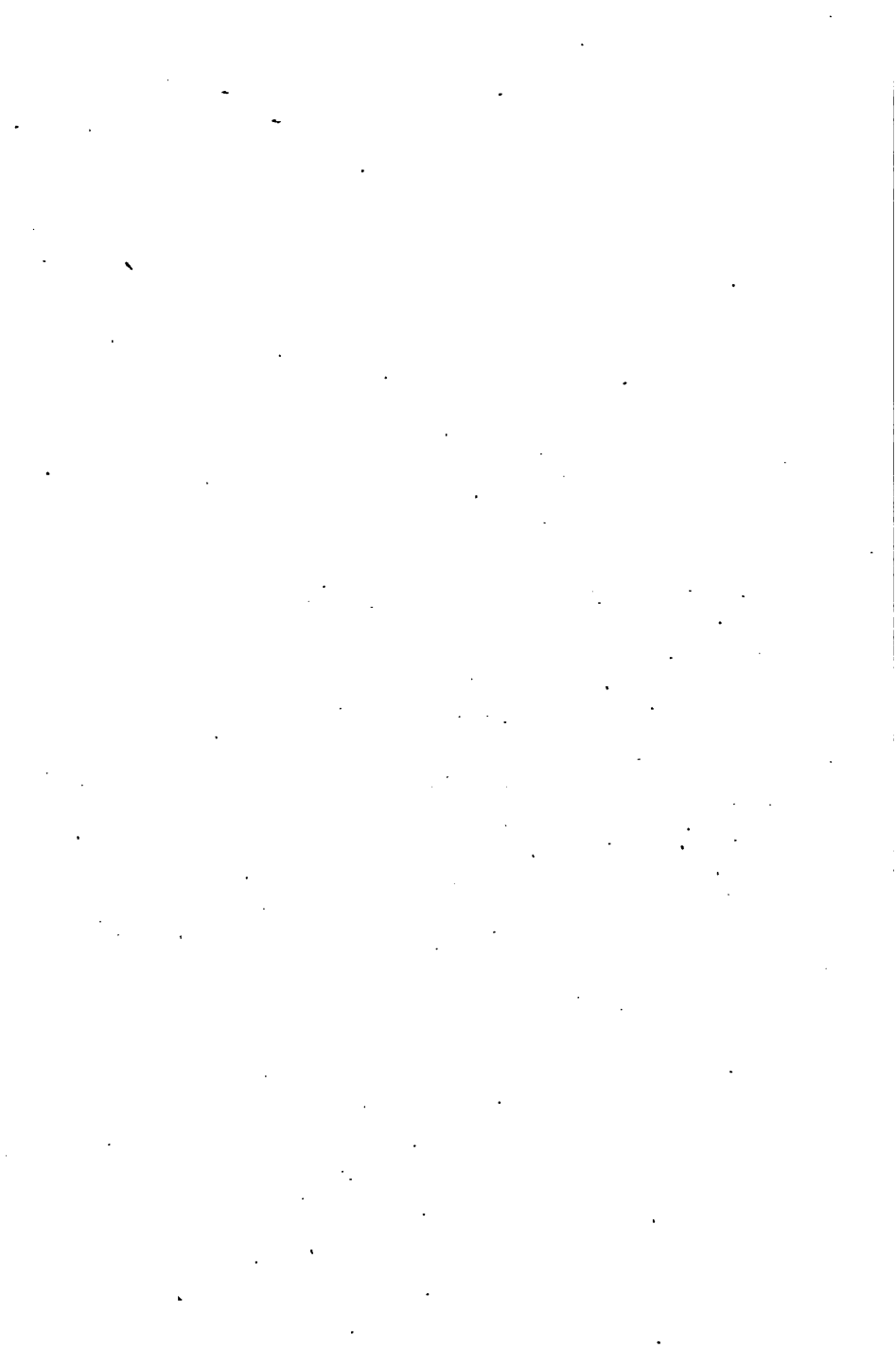


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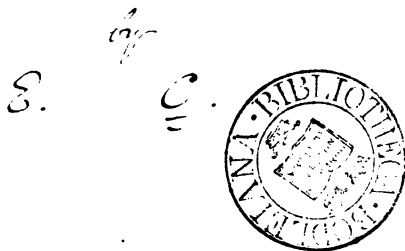


A VISIT
TO
MY DISCONTENTED COUSIN.

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A VISIT
TO
MY DISCONTENTED COUSIN

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DEDICATION.

MY DEAR DAGENTREE,

I hope you will allow me to dedicate to you these recollections of a pleasant visit, notwithstanding your churlish criticism on the proof-sheets. You say I have held you up to the public as a bore, who talks like a book, and prosed and tells stories after dinner. Be under no apprehensions on that score. No one who knows you would for a moment suspect you of being able to express yourself as I have represented you. You furnished the rude materials—and very rude they were. They owe their harmony and symmetry to me. You were

“ But as the wind passing heedlessly o’er,
But all the wild sweetness they woke is my own.”

With this explanation, which is no more than your due, this volume is affectionately inscribed to you by

Your friend,

E. C.

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A

VISIT TO MY DISCONTENTED COUSIN.



CHAPTER I.

DAGENTREE TO PEMBERTON.

"I WAS grateful for yours, my dear fellow, but much more so for your remembrance of me than for your advice. You tell me to travel. Why should I? What should I gain by tearing across this wide world, with a monster tea-kettle in front of me, the side of a ditch visible on my right, a volume of pestilential smoke on my left, and obnoxious companions by my side? Variety, indeed! It is not to be found in what men call travelling; there is much more variety to be enjoyed at my barn-door. As I sit on the edge of the pump-trough, and listen to the complacent crowing of my dorkings, while I smoke my morning cigar in the sunshine, I find infinite variety, to say nothing of fresh air and peace. The

A

humours of my feathered friends are perpetually on the change. I know them all, and have studied their characters. The huge Shanghai, the master of the yard ; the haughty, swarthy Spaniard ; the fiery, pretentious bantam ; the old matronly hen, who parades with staid dignity, like a London chaperon, and watches with sidelong eye the crumbs of comfort, as they are snapped up by her hungry progeny ; the young *débutante*, newly-out, rushing hither and thither, but quailing at the splay-foot and terrific presence of the Chinese potentate ; and those chirruping, cheeping, yellow, callow little fledglings, which wriggle about like terrible children, and get everywhere they should not,—show one a deal of life. Here, under the shade of fragrant hawthorn, you may contemplate all the virtues, displayed amid the brightest sun and softest shadow, and changing with each shifting zephyr. There may, no doubt, be better employments in this world, but trundling through space is not one of them.

“I never met with a man, and hardly ever with a woman, in a railway carriage I should ever care to see again. Take the masculine type of your travelling companion. You join him, we shall say, on your way by night express from London to York. Hour, one in the morning ; scene, Newark or Retford ; wind, easterly, with occasional sleet. You have

made your solitary nest as comfortable as circumstances would permit of ; built up a couch for repose, and disposed your various properties on the empty seats. Guard rattles at the door. Enter a bagman, two bagmen, three bagmen, and a lawyer's clerk. In they rush, glare angrily at yourself, toss your traps contemptuously from the nooks in which they repose, and each sits him down with a grunt and sigh, redolent of the gin and water which has solaced the midnight vigils. Perhaps one—or all—pull out travelling caps, and turn to revolting sleep ; and then, O ye gods, what an awakening when the gray twilight dawns on their unlovely cheeks ! Or perchance they talk—talk parish or sporting slang, or village fast life, and laugh, making night hideous. Existence knows no greater agony. You, with your limbs cramped by that obese brute in front of you, possessed by demons of a hundred fidgets, every sense offended, arrive, semi-animate, at the Station Hotel, and spend the remaining hours before breakfast in a vain struggle with the screams and puffs of liberated steam. Call you that variety ? It is the very monotony of wretchedness.

“ But you, ignorant of the world, and learning life in the Library of the Middle Temple, suggest that I may meet my FATE, as you pedantically call it, when on my travels ; meaning, I suppose, that I may

encounter an enchanting and bewildering female in a railway carriage. I hope I never shall. One is quite as likely to be robbed and murdered in such circumstances as bewildered and enchanted. I have met women in railway carriages—fat women and thin women, old and young ; I have met the parson's wife going to visit her sister, full of domestic grievance and disaster ; I have met the dean's wife, sniffing with aquiline nose the fumes of defunct tobacco, and made up in defiant preparation for a loving contest with the Lady Bishop ; I have met the faded spinster, fretful at all times, but now goaded to irritation by the consciousness that she is travelling alone. But these solitary fair ones were all too near to lend enchantment to the view. We were mutually displeased to meet, and well pleased to part ; and nothing about us in each other's company became us so well as leaving it.

“ You think I am lonely ; but you are, as might be expected, entirely mistaken. I have been exceedingly solitary in a London lodging at the foot of the Haymarket, the eternal roar of dreary life sounding in my daily and nightly ear, and a slip-shod damsel with uncleanly clout dogging my footsteps and tidying my room. I have been solitary in theatres and churches, solitary at balls, and very solitary at the Derby. But in thee, my loved retreat, with thy

honeysuckle and tea-roses dancing before my window; my cherished moroccas, in all their French array, smiling back to me my morning welcome; bees humming round the lattice, and all sweet breezes stirring the scented shrubs,—I am never solitary. Even the restless fly, and the perturbed and perturbing wasp, and the spider, which spins up in the trellis, are my comrades. We never interfere with each other, and pursue our own ends in the rays of the flickering sunbeams.

“Here, then, I find variety in doing the same thing every day. It is the true secret of human happiness. Why should you suppose that enjoyment is to be found in agitation, which you call variety? Unless you are greatly changed since our days at Trinity, a good dinner is not disagreeable to you. But would it make you happier were you to dine at one o’clock to-morrow, six o’clock on Wednesday, and not at all on Thursday? Half the charm of dinner is that you know when to expect it—if you are fortunate enough to have expectations on the subject. You greatly lessen the enjoyment if you allow it to seize you unawares, and come suddenly on your startled appetite. But it is the same with moral happiness. The daily recurrence of pleasant thought, produced by daily avocation, be it what it may, is perhaps the best of ethical conditions. Nay, even unpleasant

and painful toil, day by day repeated, eats into our daily life, like a chain round a tree, until the bark grows over it, and to part with it lacerates our sides. Dinginess and dirt become dear—only an earnest curate knows how dear—to those accustomed to them, and they sigh for their companions, if they are forced to leave them.

“You will ask how do I spend my life, and what treasures does monotony bestow on me. Does it bring, you will say, enjoyment to yourself or profit to the world at large? I answer, come and see. I disdain to argue; but I am not too proud to convince. Pack up your portmanteau, most ambitious and briefless of lawyers, leave your wig behind you, and judge for yourself. You are certain to do the same thing every day as long as you remain; for you shall please yourself, and so please me.”

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECT.

THIS letter, from one of the best of friends and good fellows, I received towards the end of the term in July 186—. In spite of his unwarrantable gibes, I was not then the entirely briefless barrister he described. I had actually received instructions from a real attorney on three different occasions, with the magical words “2 *gr^{at}*” marked on the reverse thereof, since the day, two years and a half before, which had seen me called to the bar. These three events, it is true, had only occurred within a fortnight of the time on which I received this letter; and if the truth were to be told, they all related to certain family arrangements. Still, I resented his ignorant sneer with proper dignity, while I accepted his invitation; and after leaving accurate directions for the guidance of impatient clients, I packed up my portmanteau, donned my suit of tweeds, and proceeded to my destination.

Charles Dagentree was my second cousin, and my

earliest friend. We met first at Harrow—two little nursery urchins, very bold in front, but very tremulous within, at our first plunge into the cold bath of the world. Our stations in life were equal, although our worldly prospects were very different. He was the only son of a wealthy and widowed squire, his mother and my father having been sisters' children. I was the youngest of seven sons of Sir Robert Pemberton, a baronet with more ancestors than acres. So, when we had traversed the orthodox round of Harrow and Cambridge, I went forth to gather my own laurels, and make, if I could, my own bread ; and he, his father having been dead some time, to assume possession of an estate worth £15,000 a year.

When highways diverge, and two wayfarers part to follow different tracks, the longer their journey the farther apart they become. So is it often in life. You leave your bosom friend on the threshold of the University—your *dimidium animæ*—one who had become the greater part of yourself, the first to greet you in the morning, the last to leave your rooms at night ; and then between you falls the dark curtain of real life. He goes his way ; you go yours ; and after a year or two, you become to each other a memory of the past. So it was with us. I went to the Middle Temple, and what with keeping terms and grinding in the ill-lighted den of a special pleader—

relieved occasionally by a few Greenwich and Richmond festivities, and now and then a professional orgie—I lost sight of, and for the time forgot, my college twin-brother. My father had good friends in town ; but it was but seldom that I frequented the West-end. I preferred the Bohemians of the law ; and it wearied and *gênéd* me to get myself up for the starched proprieties of Belgrave Square. Now and then, indeed, Charles Dagentree's tall, slim figure, and little head, and pretty feminine features would cross my dreams ; and they came to me as a vision of the past. We interchanged one or two letters ; but the correspondence soon flagged, mainly owing to my own remissness ; and until, in answer to a letter from me, I received the epistle I have just given my readers, and more than six years after we had parted, I had not seen or heard of him.

He, meanwhile, with the world all before him where to choose, had spent, as I found afterwards, a far less active, and, I fear, not a happier life. He was a man of peculiar and unusual temperament. Upright, honourable, truthful to transparency, sensitive and tender as a woman, he had cherished throughout our school and college days a cynical optimism, which was sharp to seize on the weaker phase of everything, and to find topics for quiet depreciation in what most of his companions admired. I believe that this habit

had its origin in a singularly nervous and gentle nature, which was susceptible, even to pain, of the little rubs and crosses which harder spirits disregard. He felt not so much for himself as for others. He did not know what fear was ; and, in all our school-boy exploits, his courage and coolness were never known to fail. But if his companions were disappointed or unjustly used, he was miserable ; and rude sounds and noises exasperated his finely-strung system. But he was, withal, manly and generous ; and gradually surrounded himself with a crust of feigned acerbity, to conceal the very poignancy of his kindliness.

After leaving college, he travelled a little and studied a little abroad. Then he came home, and took a couple of London seasons. He then retreated to the country, farmed a little, and plunged deeply into bibliomania, and, at the period of which I am now about to speak, had become a kind of well-disposed hermit, living alone in his ancestral halls, and doing, as he said, the same thing every day.

CHAPTER III.

THE JOURNEY.

DAGENTREE GRANGE, to which I was bound, I had not seen since my holidays at Harrow. It lay in a county which I am not obliged to name, and which I shall not disguise by a tiresome pseudonym. It may be that, in the course of these pages, I may become personal and obnoxious, and it is still more probable that I may be unjustly suspected of being so. It was, however, one of the most ancient and umbrageous of the southern counties, such as alone in the wide world exhibit the perfection of verdure and foliage alongside of civilisation and railways. In the bloom of a late summer, the bright hedgerows and rich pastures, the huge ancestral elms, which cast their deep shadow on the sward, and the never-ending vistas of woodland landscape, which chequer the blazing sunlight above, and cheer and refresh the eye, make the South of England a region of leafy glory ; and to such scenes was I on my way. The reader may be informed that I started

from Waterloo Bridge by the train which leaves, or then left, at 3.45 P.M., duly bought my *Saturday Review* and *Punch*, and sat down in my corner, next the farthest window, with my back to the engine, with all the characteristic selfishness of an Englishman. I had only two companions, who seemed to be travelling together; but I looked at them with the conventional supercilious stare, and devoted myself with marked exclusiveness to the *Saturday*. An hour or two, however, sufficed to exhaust my literary appliances, and tired of the endless affectation of absolute wisdom, and the marvellous profundity of ken in estimating human absurdity, which is the staple of weekly newspapering, I fell asleep.

I must have slept about half an hour, when I was aroused by the voices of my companions, which were elevated in keen discussion, and were loud enough to drown the roar of the train.

"I'll tell ye what it is," said one, in a high-pitched nasal key, "that cock won't fight at all. We must have positive proof; and if we can't find it, we must make it."

"Did you ever get a ray of light on it?" said the other. "Did you receive any message at the time?"

"Not I; I was too glad at that time to be beyond hearing. I had nothing to be proud of, and a good

deal of the other sort. It was a mere chance I saw your advertisement in Boston."

"What kind of looking girl was she?"

"They were as like as two peas."

"But, if we cannot show she was alive after that, can't we better it?"

"How?" said the other.

Here the heads approached, and the voices were lowered. I could not catch what was said.

"By Jove!" was the next exclamation, "if all fails, I'll chance it. But we must alter the bargain."

"Hush!" And I was conscious that two pairs of eyes were directed to me; and not wishing to be taken further into confidence, I opened my own, and surveyed them more attentively than I had done.

One of the speakers seemed to be a man of about five and thirty, with features which ought to have been handsome, but were disfigured by the worn air of fatigue and dissipation which pervaded them. He had an expression, half-open, half-cunning—one of those countenances in which apparent *bonhomie* and frankness conceal utter disregard of and indifference to others,—an untrustworthy face, although not altogether an unpleasant one, with a good deal of intelligence and ready humour written in its lines. His companion seemed considerably older, and was

apparently about fifty. He was a sleek, punctiliously-dressed gentleman, with an old-fashioned shirt-frill, a blue coat and white waistcoat, a close-shaven face; and seemed to be made up after the fashion when George III. was king, and when pig-tails and powder were necessary to complete the toilet. His face denoted profound dissimulation, and spoke all over of the prosperous village-attorney. I knew the species well, and I could not mistake, and had not mistaken, this example of it.

They relapsed into silence for some time, when the elder of the two addressed some casual remark to me, and endeavoured, as I thought, to lead me into conversation. But I had been so impressed by the handwriting of fraud I had seen in his face, and unfavourably prepossessed by what I had heard, that I resisted his attempts—civilly however, and without showing my dislike.

Again I fell fast asleep, and slumbered until "Plumtree Junction" sounded in my ears. My destination was reached. I opened my eyes, but my two companions had disappeared. I suppose they got out at some intermediate station. But all these things, although I had reason to remember them afterwards, gave me little thought at the time. I found my friend's groom and dog-cart waiting for me; and a drive of four miles, through deep lanes and

leafy twisting country roads, brought me to his gate, which I reached shortly before seven.

I need not describe the Grange. It was one of those old picturesque brick houses, built at a period of English architecture when it was not beneath the dignity of the architect to study beauty as well as comfort. Many of these old mansions, dating from the reign of Elizabeth, or even Henry VIII., still remain to teach a stolid and tasteless generation how available brick and mortar are in the hands of a real artist. Jessamine and roses covered its walls and clustered round its latticed windows. The entrance was reached through an old carved stone gateway, and a path paved with stone slabs. Old acacias and yew-trees gave a sombre air to this front ; but it was quaint and picturesque. As my fly drove up, a white-headed butler and a footman came forth to meet me, and in the doorway stood Dagentree, who received me warmly with both hands, and led me into his Temple of Monotony, the praises of which he so loudly sounded.

I found my friend not greatly altered from the time at which we had parted. His downy moustache had become decided. A comely curling beard gave more manliness to his face. His delicate pink and white complexion was replaced by brown, and firmer lines gave vigour to the old winning smile. But he

was still the same, and when I looked in his eyes—six feet as they were from the ground—I felt myself back in Trinity again.

His retreat certainly justified his praises of it. It looked out on a terraced parterre, blazing with flowers, laid out in masses with great taste, in front of the full *suite* of public rooms. A Naiad—a statue far from contemptible—presided over a fountain in the centre; and a few other heathen divinities adorned the old parapet wall, and flanked the steps which led to the tier below. The grass, walks, and borders were kept in beautiful order, and the yellow tea-roses danced, as he had said, outside the large oriel window. The house, standing on an elevation, commanded a boundless expanse of woodland, over which the setting sun was darting his last purple gleam. The scarcely-moving air wafted such pleasant odours, the scene was so still and bright and peaceful, that I thought it might be easy enough in such quarters to do the same thing every day.

The interior of the library was equally complete in its way. It was furnished with taste and quiet luxury. The soft Turkey carpet made the footsteps noiseless. Easy chairs seemed to invite to indolent study, and on the cedar-wood shelves were several thousands of the precious volumes of which he had spoken.

I know something of what books ought to be ; and certainly, I had never seen together a collection which seemed to promise a richer treasure from Aldus, Elzevir, or Baskerville, than his bookcases contained. This is a conviction which comes by instinct to the initiated, and in no degree depends on the inside of the volumes.

After a few words of hearty welcome on his part, and genuine admiration on mine, he led me through a corridor of moderate size, up a flight of old oak steps, into an anteroom, out of which my bedroom opened. Like the rest of the establishment, it was brimful of unostentatious comfort, in every conceivable form which good taste and minute care could supply. There was a completeness about the appointments which evinced a mind given to details ; and when left alone, and clad in dressing-gown and slippers, I stretched myself on the sofa and looked out, from a story higher, on the bright scene below, I felt that, in my case at least, his trouble had been well bestowed.

CHAPTER IV.

GOSSIP.

"**N**OW, Pemberton," said my friend, as we sat down to dinner in the vaulted hall, hung round with the portraits of many generations, "you see my hermitage, wherein I practise the monotony I preach. You will admit there may be worse daily occupations than that which we are going to begin."

"It has, at least," I said, "one variety on this occasion, in my presence here. But I should be very glad to become an element of monotony also, on such conditions."

We chatted on through dinner; and when we were left alone, with a bottle of claret, and the servants had retired,—

"Do not suppose," I said to Dagentree, "that all these pleasant things have at all convinced me in favour of your seclusion. 'Small is the worth of beauty from the light retired.' A house full of pleasant guests would act as mirrors in redoubling the charms of this lovely spot. Pleased and friendly

faces are the best reflection of scenes such as these."

"Pleased and friendly faces! yes; but where are you to find them? Did you ever know a house full of visitors which was not a menagerie of evil passions—petty jealousy, stupid listlessness, smiles and simpers, and praises manufactured for the occasion, changed to sneers, and detraction, and disparagement in the shelter of the guest's own room? I think Abou Hassan's plan, in the 'Arabian Nights,' was a very good one, never to have above one visitor at a time, and to turn him out next morning with a hint not to return. Pleased and friendly faces may last for one night; but the next day they find you out, or are found out, and the third they are absolutely fiendish. How, at the end of a week, they hate you and each other! how the men sulk and the women sneer at you and at the rest of the party! And oh! the rapture and the relief of the moment when one side says, 'Thank Heaven, that is over,' and the other, 'Thank Heaven, they are gone at last.' And with all this in their hearts, and undissembled glee on their faces, to hear the hypocritical adieus, the feigned regrets, the lamentations over the fate which has rent such attached hearts asunder—what would Democritus have given for such food for inextinguishable laughter?"

I laughed heartily myself at the energy of Dagen-tree's vituperation. "True," said I, "but the same people who were so glad to get away will be as glad to come back, which proves it is not all hypocrisy."

"It proves no such thing. They like your dinners, I admit; they like to have it said they are on visiting terms with you; they like to have a chance of disposing of their daughters; they like to escape the dreariness of their own homes; and they like to have something and somebody to abuse. These are genuine tastes; and you may rely on their being indulged on any opportunity that offers. But these, and such as these, are the true thoughts which lie under pleasant and friendly faces."

"Not under mine, at all events; which, if not pleasant, is at least friendly. But I find no true philosophy in your cynical vein. You have no right to judge your kind if you refuse to study them. St Anthony, you know, even in the wilderness, found more temptations than he could altogether combat."

"He brought that on himself for his untidy and savage mode of life. An anchorite need not neglect to wash. He may wear a clean shirt, and sleep between well-aired sheets, though he were a very Timon. But no such elements enter here as disturbed that questionable saint's repose."

"So much the worse for the hermit. But is it true

that your heart has remained proof until now against the assaults of the mighty enslaver of saints and sinners? Were you never in love?"

"I am not quite sure," said my friend, quite gravely. "I have only suspected it twice in my life. My first flame enslaved me at Harrow, and she was an entirely historical character, and, I believe, I was her sole adorer. You may remember that I used to learn (and on what compulsion) sundry lines from a book no mortal ever reads willingly, I mean 'Silius Italicus.' I actually mastered the first two books of his divine, but utterly forgotten and entirely unreadable, 'Punic War.' There was a damsel whose prowess was recorded in sounding hexameters in those pages; of whom it is written, that after careering much in front of beleaguered Saguntum, and having done many warriors to death, her horses reared at the apparition of a hero with a lion's skin on his helmet, and the hero cut off her head neatly, and carried it into Saguntum on the point of his spear. Time has mellowed my enthusiasm, but she was my ideal for many a reverie; and even now I never see a Grecian head on slim neck and sloping shoulders without thinking how it would look on the top of a lance, and displayed over the parapet of Chester walls, which I always identified with that redoubtable fortress."

“A very hopeless attachment. But what of the second?”

“Well, the second was less romantic—and more serious, perhaps—but a little out of the beaten track. It was, in short, what you would call an adventure ; and as I am not ashamed of my part in it, the tale is at your service.”

CHAPTER V.

BENEVOLENCE.

“ONCE I did meet a fair one in my travels ; and you may triumph, if you will, over the fact. I own, also, that even my philosophic heart looks back with something of interest to the short romance of which she was the heroine.

“Some four years ago, after spending a fortnight in Paris—where, in confirmation of my views, every one does the same thing every day—I was on my way by rail to Calais, returning to revisit the fogs of mine own unromantic land. We stopped for a quarter of an hour at Amiens, and on the platform I observed a young and lady-like woman, with a little boy just old enough to totter about in her hand. She was not at all a mysterious fair one ; and her greatest share of beauty was her youth, and the bright animated expression which lighted up a face not untouched by care. She was dressed in good taste, but plainly, almost economically, and her appearance generally indicated more breeding than worldly prosperity.”

"Prettily described! The cynic seems to have used his eyes with unnecessary minuteness."

"We were preparing to resume our seats, and the train was moved forward to take on some trucks, when I heard at my side a piercing scream; and turning round, I saw the little fellow on the rails, just in front of the advancing engine. The mother had let go his hand for a moment, and the child had scrambled to the edge of the platform, and rolled over. In an instant, a railway porter had seized and rescued the little one. The mother made a spring forward, and would have plunged into certain destruction, had I not grasped and detained her. She then fainted dead away. Time was up, and the train was about to start; but time was of little consequence to me, and money not of much more, so I resolved to wait for the next train, and see how the poor woman fared. The train went off, and my luggage with it; and I was left on the platform at Amiens.

"The lady was kindly cared for by the railway people. Your Frenchman has a soft heart and a gentle hand in such emergencies. She came slowly to herself, and her first cry was for her child. He was standing by her, talking artlessly to his sleeping mammy in his infantine English. She then raised herself with a startled look, and tried to stand up, saying she must go and take her seat; but the effort was

too much for her, and she nearly fainted again. On being gently told that the train had gone, she fell into a paroxysm of despair.

“‘I must go! I am lost! He will think I would not come!’—and many other ejaculations of the same sort the poor creature poured forth incoherently; but I am a bad reporter of female utterances, and, save to my English ears, what she said was entirely unintelligible. I gathered, however, that some important result depended on her crossing the English Channel by the packet which left on the arrival of the train which had just gone, that her funds were nearly exhausted, and that even to wait for the next train would be fatal to her plans.

“Finding myself unexpectedly obliged to act as interpreter, as she sat in the station-house the picture of clamorous despair, I introduced myself to her as her countryman, expressed my hope that she would allow me to be of service to her, and begged her to compose herself, while I went to inquire what could be done.

“I accordingly had an interview with the railway officials, as to the possibility of obtaining a special train to overtake that which had just left. At first, of course, the thing was impossible; and then, equally of course, a few *napoleons* made it possible; and after more than half an hour had elapsed, I had made my bargain for a special engine and carriage.

"I found my heroine in a state of great exhaustion and despondency ; but when I informed her of what I had done, her excitement returned, and her protestations of gratitude were unbounded."

"So you and the lady started by special train, did you?" said I.

"Of course," replied Dagentree. "In a few minutes our train was ready, and we started just in time to make it possible that we might accomplish our object. As we careered along, she told me her history."

And this history, as my friend's manner was slightly embarrassed, I shall give to my readers in the first person.

"My married name is Emily Trench. My husband is a civil engineer, who was lately employed on one of the large railways which are now in the course of construction in the neighbourhood of Amiens. My marriage—it is a sad story, sir—was against my father's wish, and, I fear, broke his heart. He was a clergyman in a rural parish in Gloucestershire ; and I was all to him, as little Harry now is to me. Henry, my husband, came down to our neighbourhood, on the recommendation of Mr Locke, and, having good looks and good manners, became a general favourite ; but my father, who disliked railways and all connected with them, conceived an antipathy to him

from the first. It was the old tale ; but we loved, and owned it to each other, and I eloped from my father's house to be married. The old man never looked up again, and died before we had returned from our wedding tour. It was so hard. I had written beseeching his forgiveness for myself and Henry ; and I had thought so much of how I would soothe him when I came back, and win him to like my husband, and how happy we should all be together ; and he was dead, and I never was to see him or hear his voice again.

“ I did not feel the shadow as I do now. I was happy in my new position. My husband was very kind to me, and I put away the thought of my disobedience and my loss.

“ A year and a half ago we came over here, and after a little, somehow my husband seemed to change. I could not tell what caused the change, and hardly in what it consisted ; but I saw thoughts in his face which he never spoke, and I could not be happy while I saw them. He began to be more frequently absent from home, and I found on more than one occasion that he was seen with companions of whom he said nothing to me. We never quarrelled or had discussions on these matters, and outwardly were as loving as ever ; but we both knew that there was a drop which made our cup less sweet than

it had been; I deserved it; but scarcely what followed.

“One morning I awoke early, and was surprised to find that my husband was not beside me. With a sinking presage of ill, I arose, and found on my table a note addressed to me in his handwriting. I opened it. It contained a bank order for a thousand francs, and a few lines, in which he said that circumstances he could not explain to me compelled him to leave me for a few weeks; that it concerned his interests that this should not be known; that he would write to me in a few days, and that in the meantime he had left me money enough for my wants until his return.

“The words were kind, though cold. But I could not understand the occurrence, and felt sure something must be wrong. His reticence—for he was generally communicative—had the worst augury for me. From that day until this morning I have never heard one word from him. To-day I received a letter from a shipbroker in Liverpool, saying that he had heard from my husband, who was in America, and that a letter from him to me was in his hands, but that he had not sent it, not being sure of my address, especially as it was absolutely necessary that I should sail by the steamer which leaves the Mersey to-morrow afternoon.

“You cannot imagine the dreadful misery of these

last months. I was forbidden to speak, and did not know what mischief I might do if I did. My money I saw melting away, and my last farthing paid for my journey to London by the last train. But for your kindness, I had been utterly ruined."

"Such," continued Dagentree, "was her history. The shock, acting on her enfeebled frame, had greatly prostrated her; and as we dashed along past fields and villages, towns and stations—our way being prepared for us by telegraph—she could speak no more; and even the care of the little one devolved on me,

"I like children—especially lisping ones. There is music in their infantine voices, and little guile in their honest hearts. So when Harry woke up, he and I had a long talk together during that strange ride in the evening. What we talked of mattered little: chiefly of Harry's shoes, and the comparative merits of red shoes and blue shoes; and whether Harry could or would throw me out of the window—on the probability of which he descanted with much gravity; and such like important and weighty matters. His mother fell into deep sleep, and Harry prattled himself again to repose; and as I looked at the two, I wondered what fate had in store for them.

"Suddenly, a whistle and a yell from our engine. We are at Calais; and through the darkness there is

the funnel of the steamer, and the steam roars from the safety-valve. I shoulder Harry, and we make our way down the pier; and this part of the journey was successfully accomplished.

"I performed my task of nursery-maid with perfect success, until we reached London in the gray of the morning. There the care of her Liverpool correspondent had provided some one to receive her. To him I committed my charge; and with moist gray eyes, and many thankful words, she took her leave of me. And so ended my little romance.

"Not quite. Two days afterwards my eye caught a paragraph in the *Times*: "Awful Shipwreck of the *Australasian*, bound for New York!" The paragraph stated that this vessel had sailed from Liverpool the previous afternoon, and had foundered off the coast of Ireland with all on board; and I saw afterwards in a list of the passengers 'Mrs Trench and child.'

"Now you have it all, and know the first and the last time I ever had a flutter in the regions of the heart. I never inquired further about poor Emily and Harry. It was a sad fate; yet, I do not know. My mind misgives me about the husband; and perhaps the waves of the Atlantic were merciful, and rescued my travelling companions from evil to come.

“And now,” he said, “the shades are deepening. We had better have coffee, and then you may retire, and sleep as soundly as a lawyer’s conscience will allow you.”

So ended my first evening at Dagentree Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE MORNING.

THE bright sun streaming in through the latticed window woke me next morning about nine o'clock. I found that I had been deaf to the summons of the servant who had been sent to arouse me, and made as much haste with my toilet as I could. I found my host in the library, where breakfast was set.

"Good morning," he said. "I am glad to find the load of anxieties which your clients impose upon you do not interfere with your slumbers. I have been labouring for your advantage all the morning, as that dish of trout may testify."

"I am glad I am to profit by your exertions. And now," said I, as we sat down to breakfast, "tell me something of your neighbours. To judge from the chimneys and turrets I see among the trees, there must be a number of handsome residences in your vicinity, and, I should hope, eligible inhabitants also."

"A genteel neighbourhood, I assure you; but

much too genteel for me. Within the radius of ten miles you may find one real duke, two earls, and a brace or two of baronets, when they are at home ; but whether or when they are at home I am entirely ignorant, and gather all my knowledge of their movements from Briggs, the butler, who, worthy soul, makes conscience of knowing all that concerns them much better than themselves. But if you are inclined for a ride after breakfast, we can go the round, and I shall do the lionising to the best of my limited knowledge. But I never pay visits excepting once a year, and no one ever visits me, excepting as the angels do, I am thankful to say ; and on such occasions Briggs has instructions to let the angels pass on. Let me give you a trout. Here is a right worthy half-pounder, only two hours out of his native element—that is, the water. It cost me some trouble to secure him.”

“I had rather eat than catch him, or try to do so,” I replied, rather snappishly ; for I never could throw a fly, and the hours I have spent with maniacs of the gentle art I reckon among the most unhappy of my life.

“Be not profane. If your mundane, parchment, cobwebbed soul, breathing the atmosphere of dust and decisions, is incapable of purer pleasure, be joined to your own idols, if you will, but sneer not at mine.

The stream-side is my kingdom, and there I find—what no country house will afford you—society where none intrudes.”

“East wind, gentle sleet, vexation, rheumatism, and slow death!” said I, not to be behindhand in hard words. “I have always found that when a man can do nothing else, he always says he can fish, and pretends he likes it.”

“That is your Temple life. If you lived in the world, you would know that a man who can fish can do anything. No bad man ever was a good angler.”

“I bow to your wide-spread acquaintance with a world you never see. My Temple life tells me that your professed angler is a boasting humbug, who is always nearly catching monsters of the deep, but usually returns with an almost empty basket, and makes himself merry over the tortures and sufferings of a little fish three inches long. The cold-blooded, deliberate cruelty of fishing, the prolonged death-struggle of the victim, and the fiendish complacency of the captor, are enough to make us blush for humanity.”

“Nay, your temper grows warm and your trout cold. Eat him first, and plead his cause afterwards. It is according to the best professional precedent to devour your client before you speak for him. If you have a mind for a cigar in the barn-yard before we

mount, I will give you my views at length on the subject, as I once gave them to a similar unbeliever."

I took the hint, and devoted myself to the study of the point before me with much vigour; and whatever may be the ethics of my friend's sports, its result was practical and pleasant in the last degree.

"Your library, Dagentree, is charming in its externals. I, too, have an eye for old French morocco, although I have little skill in editions. Why is it, I wonder, that our modern binders cannot reproduce that luxurious softness which the old French artists rejoiced in? They have leather, and taste, and skill, but withal they cannot make their work like that of the ancient masters. It is Lawrence compared with Van Eyck, or Sir Joshua with Rubens. Even those drunken, staggering letters which title the old volumes on the back have an unknown richness about them which modern uniformity falls far short of."

"The same idea has frequently crossed my mind. I believe one-fourth of the superiority is real; the rest is mere association. The real superiority which the old binders possessed was in the treatment and dressing of the morocco skins, which was a much slower and more careful process than the present. Competition and mechanical improvements have facilitated and cheapened their production, but, as in many other arts, have sacrificed the attainment of the most per-

fect commodity for a much higher average and a much lower, that is, comparatively lower, price. In the designs of their tooling also, they are decidedly superior, as far as grace and lightness go. As has happened in other departments, so in this : the artists who first raised it to the level of an art remain unapproached, simply because they were original designers, the rest but copyists. But, excepting in these particulars, the moderns unquestionably bind better. The straggling letters, the uneven lines, the disjointed tooling, although they carry joy to the insane or fatuous brain of the book-collector, are simply bungled work. But as they are found in the select company of old morocco and rich design, they partake of their reputation and their triumphs. Still, I am glad that men cannot bind as they bound in the days of Louis Quatorze ; for one great object I have in life would thereby have been destroyed, and a great artificial pleasure, an engrossing acquired taste, would have perished."

"Your pleasure, then, is in the outside, not the inside, of books?"

"You speak according to your lights. 'When unadorned adorned the most,' may be poetry, but it is not good taste, either in books or beauties. The adored one does look better, I believe, when dressed with care and elegance than in a dowdy dressing-

gown. Yet it does not follow that you only love her for her dress. I love my books because they are gems of price set in the richest chasing. The finest specimen of Derome or Thouvenin applied to a wretched trashy volume would inspire me with disgust, as all incongruity should. But such a case is very rare. The old bindings, in the finer specimens, are almost uniformly used for fine copies of valuable books, because they were executed on the orders of wealthy men of letters or patrons of literature. But this is too fine a morning to waste on bibliography. Come to the barn-yard, and hear my views on trout-fishing."

CHAPTER VII.

TROUT-FISHING.

“**T**ROUT-FISHING, with the artificial fly, be it known to you, and to all like heretics and scoffers, is the most exciting and most soothing, the highest in art, the most mechanical in action, the most intellectual, and yet the most relaxed and care-less of all human enjoyments. Even a tyro can appreciate its glorious external attributes. Go where you will, with rod in hand, wherever you find a trout, you will find nature also in her most genial and loveliest mood. Even in the sluggish waters of the verdant South, with the long bulrush and the water-lily mirrored in the stream, and the rude palisade, the village stile, the old hawthorn hedges reflected on its bosom, a kingfisher now and then darting by like a gleam of radiance, and the rustic bridge, festooned with ancient ivy, spanning the full flood—is a world of romance and beauty. How fast, as you ply your sport, the panorama changes. Tennyson knew something of the charm when he

wrote the "Brook ;" but although he does speak of

' Here and there a speckled trout,
And here and there a grayling,'

I doubt, judging only from his poem, if he be a true disciple of Izaak Walton.

"Yet, to tell the truth, I have misgivings as to that fishy oracle. He was a Cockney sportsman, after all, and pursued his craft in dull, sleepy waters, and would watch his float bobbing up and down, much bemused in country beer, as his verses testify. Let me remark, by the way, that *bemused* does not mean muddled, as some modern wiseacres seem to imagine, but *given to the Muses*. It was of rhyming parsons that Pope wrote—

' Is there a parson, much bemused in beer '—

whose verses, like Izaak's, were inspired by that heady beverage. But the streams of the North for me. No sophisticated, well-trained river or rivulet, afraid to lift up its voice and let its gurglet be heard in good society, with a bed so smooth, and a course so noiseless that not a pebble ripples its surface, nor a rock lashes into foam the decorous current of its course. These have their charms. Yea, they have their trout also—large, yeoman-like, wary, well-fed denizens, not at all to be despised in capturing or when captured. But give me the streams of the

North—dashing from Yorkshire, or Northumberland, or Berwickshire, or Dumfriesshire upland,—or springing to liquid life from the cliffs of the Grampians or the peaks of Ben Nevis. O bright and glorious Loch Laggan! when shall I see thee again; or how shall I forget, and hope to be forgiven, the gorgeous robe in which I saw thee dressed when, rod in hand, for the first and last time I beheld thee? What a blaze of splendour invested thee! The setting sun shed a flood of purple light on the more purple heath which coloured the hill slopes, illuminating the long western vista of mighty gorges, at the end of which, in a liquid mist, loomed the monarch of Scottish mountains. The yellow birch, with its silver stem, fringed all the lake, and straggled up the broken cliffs. The ground was carpeted by bright-orange ferns, which clustered round the gray granite boulders; and there, like a sapphire set in topazes and pearls, lay the broad blue waters, streaked by a long silver arrow of light. My similes rather jostle each other; but the scene was such as makes the heart bound, in the keen fresh mountain air; and there, close to the cradle of the Spey, had I one of the best days of trout-fishing I ever enjoyed. Had I not been a trout-fisher, Loch Laggan had been a sealed book to me.

“But study a stream more closely. There are

books to be found in the running brooks. How musical that ever-sounding, ever-varying voice ! Loud or low, its full sonorous note fills but never grates upon the ear. It speaks in tones of unnumbered meanings—doleful or joyous, as the mood of the listener may be. Light and shadow hold revelry on its bosom, reflection doubling the beauty on its margin. Now, beneath the shadow of that sombre crag, with the mountain-ash nodding from its crest, the very darkness of despair inspires it. Anon it leaps into the daylight with a merry bound, mocking the old gray rocks with perennial laughter ; now it relaxes its headlong pace, assumes a grave and stately march, widening and expanding its crystal surface with meek and composed dignity ; then, bidding all proprieties adieu, rushes in frantic cataract into the very pit of Avernus, and seems to leave sight and hope behind. It is the very pain of nature's beauty—so suggestive of pure enjoyment, that the earth-born fancy moves too slowly, and the forms crowd so swiftly by that they elude the grasp.

“ All very fine, you will say. But what is all this to trout-fishing ? Do you really think that these charms are only disclosed to a stick and a string, with a hook at one end and yourself at the other ? Thus I reply. In the first place, but for trout-fishing I should never have seen them ; and as you never fish,

you have never seen them. But were you a brother of the rod, you would know that between the man who walks, and the man that fishes along the bank, there is as much difference as between him who lives with a great man and him who only knows him to bow to. One knows his bodily presence; the other, his ethereal spirit. I have heard sketchers and botanists and geologists, and hosts of other gazing or grubbing monomaniacs, say something of the same kind; but they are but poor pretenders. For the most part, they go through life with their noses perforating some old red sandstone, or imbedded in some moist grassy bank, utterly unconscious of all the glories round them. But the angler knows his stream as a friend, knows him in all his moods of temper, catches responsive wimples and familiar becks which the world wots not of—

‘They may escape the courtly sparks,
They may escape the learned clerks,
But well the wary angler marks
The kind sparkles,’

which indicate the falling flood.

Hitherto I have spoken to the profane and outside vulgar. Let me approach, with rod and line, a little nearer, and see what I can raise by my craft.

“You speak of the claims of humanity, tenderness to the dumb animals, the proverbially mute fishes. I am, you say, a brute and a barbarian because with

‘ Well-fashion’d hook,
I lure th’ incautious troutling from the brook.’

I deny the charge, and shall disprove it by better logic than your legal brain can command.

“ But I decline to be prosecuted by old women, or young lawyers, though both may be in wig and gown. Confront me with my adversary. Come out, you old speckled hypocrite, from that deep dark den, overhung with alders, the grave of many a casting-line, on the evil deeds of which no sunbeam ever shone. Nay, I have thee fast. Plunge not, wriggle not, jump not. It is all in vain. There—now I stretch thee on the stones. Come up the bank, and before I bestow on thee the fatal whack, and consign thee to the basket, plead for thy wicked life. How sayest thou? Is it cruel to tear thee from thy home, to delight in thy despairing struggles, to butcher thee to make an English holiday? All very fine, thou scourge of thy race. Tell me, with thy dying gasp, when thy maw shall be opened by remorseless cooks, what will be disclosed? A coil of red worms, many mayflies, and, oh! monster of the deep, a young trout, one of thine own family, the scarce-digested dainty on which thou didst dine. And pratest thou to me of humanity? Nay, when lured by my skill thy fatal bound was made, didst thou not mean to extinguish a bright young life, reckless of its suffer-

ings, and forgetful of the surfeit of the morning? What! It is thy natural food? And thou art mine, thou canting destroyer. Take that—I shall eat thee for breakfast.

“So much for the humanitarian heresy; the object of it being quite as much worthy of sympathy as many other standard victims of cruelty. But we shall hear nothing more from that reprobate two-pounder or from any friend on his behalf.

“Let no man, however, presume to fish with a ruffled temper, or a mind ill at ease. With sun, wind, and water propitious, Piscator is as nearly angelic as humanity can become. Complacent kindness beams from his countenance and warms his heart. But sometimes, I cannot deny, he is sorely tried. Not because he fails to catch fish; that, by itself, is only part of the game in the eyes of a true angler. The trout win one day, and he wins the next. Red and the colour cannot always succeed. But I will tell you what an angler’s temper is, could I only be with him when, descending the hill in the morning to his favourite pool, the stream brown and clear, the *spate* just abating, the wind soft and southerly, the clouds dark, and the temperature genial, he sees, just a hundred yards below, the waving of a rod; and looking down the stream, descries another a quarter of a mile off, jerked to and fro like the wand of an insane

magician. I am no friend to deeds of violence, but such things tempt to homicide, and the man who can, unmoved, survey such a scene—never caught a trout.

“Even, however, in the most complete isolation, when he is monarch of all he surveys, will temptations come. The desert is no preservative. You have taken up your position, wading nearly waist-deep, so as to command the deepest and most attractive swirl in the stream. You throw back your line for an artistic and light-dropping cast, when—misery!—your fly has fixed its barb in yonder nodding beech. Or the breeze is blowing shrewishly up the water, the current is swift and your footing precarious, when the line twines round you like Laocoon’s serpents, and the hook is fast to the centre osiers of your fishing-basket. Such trials are intense to the most placid of anglers: to the perturbed spirit, they are unendurable.

“A bad temper is thus a sad drawback to fly-fishing. But a bad conscience is still worse. The thoughts which haunt it mingle with the voices of the waters, and people each turn of the stream, each bush, and rock, and bosky bourne. A mind ill at ease finds no recreation there. Black care squats beside him, and moulds her dull monotonous promptings into something of a never-ending chant. The

evil spirit must be exorcised, or the Elysium of sport will become a Pandemonium.

“I have done. I have answered fools according to their folly. I speak not to them or to you, who have not the *mens divinator*, of the rapture and the fame of landing, after an exciting and not unequal struggle, the spotted Triton of the 'pool ; the beauty of his bright and shining side on the emerald sward ; the long-drawn sigh of successful excitement, and the golden colour of your thoughts for many a day thereafter.

‘Discite justitiam, moniti, et non spernere Divos.’

Scoff at the river gods no more.”

CHAPTER VIII.

NEIGHBOURS.

"**Y**OU have stated your case very well," said I ;
"so well that I decline to reply. Your eloquence was really pleasant while my cigar lasted ; but it is done, and I am ready to ride with you."

So we mounted, and took our way through shady lanes, and along open downs, up woodland glades, and over breezy sheep pastures, drawing bridle every now and then to talk and saunter in the sunshine.

At last we gained an eminence which commanded a view of the surrounding country.

"Now," I said, "this is the panorama, and you are the showman. Pray, begin your description."

"You see before you," he said, "the corners of three English counties. England is an island lying to the north-west"—

"Not necessary to be so elementary. You may assume the general topographical knowledge you were about to impart."

"Very well ; but do not interrupt the showman."

On the extreme left you will observe, concealed among the trees, a staring white house, with a Grecian portico. That is the ancient seat of the Dashwoods, whose representative in the last generation accompanied Lord Elgin to Greece, and brought home such an infusion of Hellenic taste, that he inflicted that hideous structure on his miserable descendants. The present man, Sir Thomas Dashwood, has a fat wife and two fat daughters. Eats, but never speaks. Good sort of man in his way ; but no more is known about him.

“Following the sky-line, you next observe the woods and grounds of Riversmere, the property of the Duke of Glamorgan. His Grace is a thin, half-starved-looking boy of nineteen, given to smoking bad cigars, attending prize fights, and very knowing in bull terriers. For further particulars apply to Ben Caunt in St Martin’s Lane. He has mother and sisters somewhere about Berkeley Square and Cheltenham. This is a princely place, with noble old oaks, and a fine abbey-looking house. I have been in it when there was no one at home.

“The next in order, placed at the foot of that wooded hill, is Bonthron, belonging to a family of the name of Carrington. The last possessor, Sir Stephen Carrington, broke his neck in a steeple-chase, about a mile off from this. The property went

to a distant relative, the widow of a Yankee skipper, or some such person. I have not seen the old lady, but believe her to have a wrinkled parchment skin, twinkling black eyes, and a strong nasal accent. She is said to have two children, which may be true, for anything I know to the contrary.

“Farther round to the right is the hospitable mansion of our county member, Mr Wendover. Him I do know, and his house also, and should like both, but for his match-making wife. Not to be censorious, she wants to make a match for me, and waylays me in all manner of dangerous places; and I advise you also to beware of her wiles. The three daughters are good-looking, I admit, and so do they. They sing, and ride, and flirt, after the most approved models; but my heart instinctively closes like an oyster at the approach of those beaming countenances, they are so much more amiable and intellectual than any one ever was. I should like to disguise myself like Haroun al-Raschid, and see how they would appear if they thought me a penniless out-cast.

“The next is Dagentree, and next that Wilhelmstone, to which Mr Denbigh has lately succeeded. He is a pleasant, intelligent young man, with a pleasant, intelligent wife—affects politics, and High Church, and earnestness, which will make him a bore

if he lives long enough. At present, he builds schools and cottages, and cultivates the rustic mind ; but the crop hitherto has been thin and scanty. Briggs says that there has been more orchard-robbing since these Puseyite scholars came in fashion. But I do not vouch for the truth of this.

“There are other people farther off, but these constitute my neighbourhood ; and I am happy to say there is not one of them of whom I know a grain more than when they first did me the honour of paying me a duty-visit when I came of age.”

“Upon my word, Dagentree, it would serve you right to leave you on a desert island, where you might be lord of the fowl and the brute to your heart's content. How you would howl for society, and abuse your solitude, and sneer at any kind-hearted four-footed thing that was good-natured enough to be civil to you ! How you would bully your dog, and snub Friday, and refuse to be comforted, because you could no longer enjoy the grandeur of avoiding your neighbours ! I am ashamed of you.”

Dagentree was silent for a minute or two, for my remark seemed to have touched an unpleasant chord :

“Well, I suppose I am ungrateful not to enjoy the good the gods provide me : but to show you that I am penitent, for one day, we may canter on to Wendover Park, and lunch there ; and if you fall into the

mantraps which are set, I shall stand aloof and laugh, but will not raise a finger to help you."

A spin of three miles brought us to the gate of the county member's country-seat : a pleasant, respectable, rather dull old place, with too much timber, but fine of its kind. The house was of that dreary type which the architects of last century thought classic : with fiddles, and cupids, and cockleshells introduced wherever ornament was thought admissible.

On the lawn in front of the house three striped petticoats, three looped dresses, three pair of neat feet and ankles, and loud lively voices, sweet though not low, proclaimed that a game at croquet was in progress. There was a fourth, a darker and more shadowy figure, who, on nearer approach, was seen to be unmistakably the curate.

As we trotted up to the door, the game was suspended, but I saw nothing of the flutter, or consciousness, which my friend's description had led me to expect. On the contrary, I saw three very handsome, good-tempered looking girls, who came up, mallet in hand, to greet their neighbour, and looked shyly, but not affectedly, at the stranger.

"Mr Pemberton—Miss Wendover, Miss Sophia, Miss Georgina—a lawyer from London, young ladies, and dreadfully learned."

"Very glad to see you," said Miss Wendover ; "but

I hope you won't make Mr Dagentree more learned than he is. I should like to burn his books."

"On the contrary, I have come to learn, and not to teach. Dagentree has given me my first lesson to-day, and you can't think how much information I have had from him about the neighbourhood, and the neighbours."

"O Mr Dagentree! what have you been saying about us?"

"Whatever it was, you see the result in our being here," said Dagentree, looking, I must own, a little foolish, as he recalled the tenor of his remarks on the family.

"We do not know what that result means," said Sophia. "Perhaps you have come to consult papa about a bill, or to ask mamma's advice about the gardener's wife."

"Or perhaps you have come for lunch, if you were to own the truth; and as that is the gong sounding, you shall have some, provided you join our game afterwards."

Dagentree was framing an excuse with his cold but courteous smile, when I at once interposed, and accepted the penalty so vivaciously that he had no means of escape.

The groom came round, and took our horses, and we entered the house; I inwardly rejoicing that I

had so unexpectedly succeeded in breaking through Dagentree's crust.

The curate, a shy, pink-faced youth—so nervous that he was usually saying something he evidently did not mean—was introduced to us as Mr Richards. He acknowledged each of us by a little dance, and said something to himself, which I have no doubt was appropriate, but was quite inaudible.

Mrs Wendover corresponded more nearly to Dagentree's description of her. She was good-looking, with a very aquiline nose, and a pair of very determined, searching eyes, which her spectacles rendered still more penetrating and dominant. She was lady-like, but manifestly given to command: and the rapid way in which she seemed to take me all in at a glance, produced an uncomfortable sensation of inferiority and subjection, which thrilled through me unpleasantly.

The conversation at lunch was made up of the lively nothings which suit such a meal, and Dagentree bore his part in it with more geniality and less cynicism than I expected.

"And so Mr Dagentree has been playing the Saturday Reviewer on his neighbours?" said Sophia to me; "I warn you beforehand that he knows nothing about them. But if you and I, Mr Pemberton, ever have a chance, I will revenge myself horribly,—I will

draw him to the life. He ought to go to Cremorne and set up as the hermit."

"I would rather take Dagentree for my hermitage," said I: "it is the most charming cell for an anchorite I ever saw; and I believe he could tell your fortune there with much more prescience than the recluse of the Thames."

"I wish he would tell me something I want very much to know. Mr Dagentree, have you seen our widow? I do so long to know all about her, and as it seems you are a walking catalogue of the landed gentry, I am certain you can enlighten us."

"Who is the widow?" said Dagentree: "I know of none excepting old Mrs Tomkins, whose cat his grace of Riversdale worried last spring, and who received a good-conduct medal from Mr Denbigh in reward for the way in which she bore her misfortune."

"Don't be tiresome. There is only one widow, as you know very well: and that is the mysterious Mrs Carrington, the prettiest and most inscrutable of mourners. We are all dying to know who she is, and who her defunct partner was, and where she was and what she did, before Sir Stephen did his only wise act in breaking his neck."

"Oh, Dagentree knows her well," said I: "he gave me a very vivid sketch of her half an hour ago."

"A fancy portrait, I assure you," said Dagentree.

"It was only yesterday that Briggs told me there was a widow of that name: but you may depend upon it, if anybody can clear up the mystery, Briggs is the man."

"Oh! I know Mrs Carrington," said the curate. "I met her on one of my visits. She is very much attached to her gamekeeper"—

A laugh greeted this abrupt announcement of the widow's predilections, which the unhappy curate was not permitted to explain. In vain he attempted to assure the party that he meant that the gamekeeper was ill, and that the widow was kind to him. He only made matters worse, and relapsed into silence.

"I don't think we need discuss Mrs Carrington any more," said mamma; "she is not in any set in the county, and is under-bred, from all I hear. It is a pity so fine an estate should have fallen into such hands."

"She seemed very pleasing," said Georgina, "when we met at church, and has a very sweet-toned voice."

"What! no nasal accent?" said I.

"No, I assure you. Why did you think so?"

"I have heard she was American."

"She may be," said Georgina; "but if she is, she is the most attractive Yankee I ever saw."

"Mr Dagentree," said Mrs Wendover, "do you

think we could tempt you to dine here on Wednesday? The Dashwoods and the Denbighs are to be here, and they wish much to meet you."

But the eyes and spectacles and voice of authority were too much for my hermit, and he relapsed at once into his frigid zone.

"Pray, excuse me, Mrs Wendover; you are exceedingly kind, but my health does not allow me to dine from home. My friend will do as he pleases."

The eyes and spectacles, by a momentary glimmer, indicated that this was not in the least what was intended. I said at once that my visit was necessarily so short that I could not avail myself of her kindness.

"We are so sorry." And rising, with rather ruffled plumes from the table, the mistress of the house sailed to the drawing-room: and the rest of the party repaired to the croquet ground.

A very pleasant, merry, and keen game it was. Croquet is a dull game to look at and a dull game to describe; but I can attest that with such players as the three Misses Wendover, it is a very lively one to play. Dagentree, Miss Wendover, and Sophia were on one side, Georgina, the curate, and I on the other. Excepting that the curate played twenty times at the peg without hitting it, and tripped over one of the hoops in attempting to rescue Georgina's hat, which

a gust of wind had blown off, no marked incident occurred. Dagentree got exceedingly excited, played very ill, but rejoiced with great rejoicing over his ultimate victory. We took our leave amid very bright looks from our fair companions, and many invitations to come and fight another day.

"So, Dagentree," I said, as we rode away, "you do not always do the same thing every day."

"When I do not, I always repent it," growled he.

"Not this time, surely."

"Yes," he replied ; and scarcely spoke during our ride home.

Rest and dress and dinner again succeeded ; and once more the majestic Briggs left us alone with the claret.

"How do you like your profession ?" said Dagentree. "A lawyer's life must be very unsatisfactory."

"Why so ?" said I.

"Because he pursues truth in fetters," said he. "I know too well to join in the vulgar notion of the dishonesty of lawyers. It is only a dishonest man who becomes a dishonest lawyer. But it must be grievous to an honourable and independent spirit to see truth ahead, and not to be able to reach her for his chains, to see the strong man trample on the weak, the might vanquish the right, the letter of the edict smother its

essence, and feel one's self a slave, bound to do the work of an iniquitous *genie*."

"True; but so it is in all human vocations. Looked at in detail, what you say is painfully true. But to have an intelligent part in the administration of that great machine, the law of our country, is a noble occupation; and in the liberty, the security, and the prosperity of our country, the true operation of the labours of the bar are seen. Then one has so much experience of human nature."

"Yes, the worst of it."

"Sometimes, but not always. I will tell you a singular incident, which I learned from old Turnbull, the special pleader, who heard the story from the solicitor to whom the incident occurred."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAGNIFICENT.

IN the ancient Roman city of Bath, about the end of last century, while it still retained much of the fashion and celebrity it had reached in the days of Beau Nash, the frequenters of the Pump-room and the Balls were divided into two rival factions, and long and fierce were their quarrels over the topic of dissension. This was neither more nor less than the not inappropriate one of the merits of two rival Doctors, who divided between them the smiles and guineas of the *élite* of Bath. Dr Heathcote, the senior of the two, long ruled over the internal economy of the upper class of patients with undisputed sway. He was a handsome, dapper, dignified, well-dressed and well-spoken little gentleman, with undeniable manners, silk stockings and shirt frill. Among the dowagers, his word was law. At whist or piquet he was an oracle, and not unfrequently the younger ladies would confide to his safe ear and kindly counsels, maladies of the heart. If he did

bow a little low to a baronet, and lower still to a coronet, it was his only foible ; and as that was part of his professional manner, it was pardonable and not unpopular.

The reign of this Æsculapian potentate was at last rudely disturbed by the arrival of a pretender to the throne. Where Dr Lenoir came from, who he was, or where he had previously practised, no one knew, or, to tell the truth, had ever ventured to ask. He was a man of immense frame, over six feet in height, with a large head, black eyes, and a good-tempered, sanguine complexion. He had commenced his Bath career by becoming the tenant of a large house on the outskirts of the town, which rumour said was used as a lunatic asylum. But he made his appearance in the Pump-room and the evening recreations, and, as he proved to be a man of wit and information, soon became a favourite with the lounging society of the place. Even in his most familiar moods, however, he had something formidable about him. No coxcomb ventured to ask him questions, and he assumed a quiet superiority which was only not galling because it was so thoroughly good-tempered.

With his patients he was exactly the reverse of the reigning sovereign. He was gruff to the great, kindly to the poor, to children gentle as a woman. Rules of practice he set entirely at defiance, and was said

by his enemies to toss up for each case whether he should kill or cure. Cure, however, he did many cases apparently hopeless, and by devoting much care to soothing the sufferings he could not cure, and making the approaches of death less agonising, he earned the gratitude of surviving relatives. Such were the rivals, for whom the card-tables of Bath waged war.

The rivals themselves were sworn brothers. Dr Heathcote at first was scornful, and then was testy ; but he could not resist the spell which Dr Lenoir seemed to wield ; and although at consultation and on professional visits he wore his dignified sneer with due propriety, many a hand at piquet did he hold with his brother physician, and when none was by to see or hear, would make his old consulting-room ring with laughter at the exuberant humour of his companion. Lenoir, on the other hand, bowed in public with the modesty of a younger man to the more mature practitioner, and assumed his place with so much kind-hearted deference that the other was entirely disarmed. But a kind of undefined pomp followed his footsteps. In the Pump-room and at the Balls he had a chosen place, which no one ever usurped ; and he went by the name of "Doctor Magnus," which, contracted by the unlearned into *The Magnificent*, was his ordinary title.

Dr Lenoir had been about three years at Bath, when the events happened of which I am about to speak. Little more was known of him then, than when he first arrived. It was known he was unmarried; but he was plainly not a marrying man. He flirted in his good-humoured way with all the pretty girls, but it was evidently flirtation of society, not of the heart. It was also certain, by his style of living, that he was in easy circumstances, and that he had resources other than his profession. The only instance in which he ever unbent from his superb demeanour, was when in company with Mrs De Grey, an exceedingly beautiful and attractive woman, who, with her husband and two young children, had lived for more than a year at Bath. Dr Lenoir plainly admired her much.

Colonel De Grey was a good-looking man, with a military air, and manners which bespoke knowledge of the world. He was not a favourite, for his demeanour was reserved to the crowd, although when at his ease he could converse with animation, and was well read and well travelled. But his wife was all that was charming. Lively, spirited, kindly, and thoroughly true, without a dash of self-conceit, or a thought of evil, ready in repartee, sparkling in small talk, but with an ever open heart and hand for real sorrow, she was the joy of all who knew her; and very honestly

distressed were the Pump-room gossips when they heard that Mrs De Grey was seriously ill.

Colonel De Grey affected Lenoir's society much : for his powers of conversation were remarkable, and they had many tastes in common. But when his wife was taken ill he sent for Dr Heathcote, to the amusement of the Bath scandal-mongers, who set it down to a slight infusion of jealousy. Now and then, as Lenoir stood leaning like a Hercules against his accustomed pillar, some wag, who thought himself privileged, launched a shaft at him with this barb to it ; but Lenoir, without the slightest discomposure, or even alluding to the gibe, shot back some sarcastic remark on his assailant which made him tingle to the tips of his fingers. But he inquired with real solicitude at Dr Heathcote as to his patient's health.

"To tell you the truth, my dear fellow," said Heathcote one day, "I wish they would call you in. Of course you know I cannot ask for a consultation with a junior : but I wish they would pay me off, and take you. I am fairly puzzled ; and all the medicines I have given her seem to make her worse."

"No wonder," said Lenoir ; "but, doctor, it would be a pity that harm should come to that poor creature because we make up our pills differently. If you make an excuse to let me attend for a day or two, I will tell you, to the best of my judgment, what I think of the case.

So Dr Heathcote made his excuse, and Dr Lenoir was called in. And the Pump-room scandal-mongers talked more than ever.

Colonel De Grey lived in a handsome villa close to the town: and thither Dr Lenoir proceeded. The colonel received him at the door, and shook him warmly by the hand.

"My poor wife is very ill, I fear, and I am sure you will do your best to bring her through."

Lenoir answered this appeal by a grunt, and walked straight into the dining-room, and looked out at the window.

"I suppose Dr Heathcote has told you the symptoms—that she never can take her food?"

"He has told me nothing. If he had I should not have believed him. I don't want to know anything about symptoms. Can I see her?"

"Certainly. She is rather better to day, and very anxious to see you. You will find her in the drawing-room."

Lenoir went up-stairs, and entered the drawing-room, the colonel simply announcing him, and then leaving the room.

Whatever he thought of the wasting ravages which a month had made on that lovely face, he said nothing

at, but put his questions more disagreeably.

"You are not to be so cross, Dr Lenoir; Dr Heathcote was never cross," she said, with a wan smile lighting up her faded cheek.

Lenoir flushed for an instant, and then replied, "Cross?—yes, I'm always cross with people like you. It's good for them."

As if she had not heard what he said, she again addressed him.

"Am I very ill, doctor?"

"Nothing but fancy and temper the matter with you. Why do you mope up here?"

"I cannot go out. You cannot tell how weak, and oh! how sick I am. O Dr Lenoir! can you not cure me? If you can't, I shall die, and leave dear Fred and my poor little children." And the poor woman burst into a paroxysm of tears.

Lenoir sat until the storm had burst, and had spent its force; but tears stood in his own impassive eyes, and his voice trembled in spite of himself when he spoke to her.

"Cure you? Of course I shall, if you don't give way to such folly: and when you are cured you will say you got well of yourself."

"Do you really mean it?" she said, faintly.

Dropping his gruff style, he said in a softer tone, "I think I can cure you." And with those words he left her, and rejoined the colonel in the dining-

room, and straightway again looked out at the window.

"Quite a common case," he said, as if to himself; "have seen it a hundred times; must have a nurse."

"A nurse!" said Colonel De Grey. "What do you think of my wife? What is her illness?"

"A very common complaint, colonel," said the doctor, "although I have not often met with it in this country. But she must have a nurse who understands sudorifics, and with your leave I will send one."

And without waiting to know whether the colonel wished to have a nurse or not, the doctor stalked out of the house.

If any one had seen the doctor's expression of countenance as he strode down to the gate, he would not have liked it. Was it wrath, or malignity, or cunning? It was a very unlovable expression, and not like the doctor's usual face.

Within two hours the nurse arrived; a tall, gaunt Frenchwoman, with a resolute set of features, who understood and could speak English when she chose, but not otherwise.

She brought with her a small phial of medicine, which she explained to Mrs De Grey was to be taken every hour during the night, and the effects of which required to be carefully watched. She seemed to.

consider this her peculiar charge, for on Colonel De Grey taking out the stopper to smell it, she snatched it away, with a pettish French exclamation, and without much reverence.

A fortnight passed over. Dr Lenoir came every day. He prescribed nothing but this nightly potion, which was gradually discontinued; and Mrs De Grey began to rally, her appetite returned, and she was apparently getting well. The colonel was greatly relieved, and was profuse in his thanks.

People began to say that there was no necessity for the doctor visiting quite so often. But the colonel did not seem to think so, for the doctor dined with him almost every other day. To Dr Heathcote's inquiries Lenoir only said, to his great wrath, that there never had been anything the matter with her but his medicines.

One evening, as the colonel and he were sitting at their wine after dinner, the former said, "When do you think Mrs De Grey will be able to travel? I think a change of air would do her good; and I begin to fear Bath does not agree with her."

"Soon, I should think," said Lenoir; "and as she is so much better, I propose to be absent for a day or two, as I have business in the country. So, if you think I can be spared, I shall go to-morrow. But don't change her regimen in my absence, nor give

her any of old Heathcote's potions. They are all very well in their way, but she has done better without them."

The colonel laughed, and gave his word to eschew the established order of things ; and next morning the doctor left.

Four days passed away, and on the fifth Lenoir again appeared at Prospect Villa.

Colonel De Grey was at home, and appeared dejected. "Things have not been so well," he said. "Your patient has had a relapse of her sickness ; and something has happened which troubles both her and me."

"What is the matter ?" said the Magnificent.

"Well, I don't like to inspire suspicions ; but I fear that nurse drinks."

"Why do you think so ?"

"Because Mrs De Grey tells me that she saw her conceal a bottle in her pocket. The woman thought she was asleep, and on her moving, concealed it hurriedly."

"Have you observed any other symptoms of drinking ?" said Lenoir.

"No, I cannot say I have, excepting that her manner is very abrupt and rude."

"I shall probe this to the bottom, you may depend on it," replied the doctor ; "and I shall examine her

about it at my own house to-night. Meanwhile say nothing more while she is here."

He saw his patient, and found she had decidedly relapsed, and was greatly depressed. His visit had little effect in reviving her spirits, and again, as he walked from the house, the evil shadow came across his face.

The same day brought a letter by post for Colonel De Grey, desiring his immediate attendance in London on urgent business : and he started the same night by the mail. Next morning, the Magnificent paid the lady a visit. She seemed greatly excited.

"Doctor," she said, "you must take that woman away ; she is a drunkard and a thief."

"She may, perhaps," the doctor replied, "take a drop of brandy now and then. But remember what fatigue she has undergone in sitting up with you."

"Well but, doctor," said Mrs De Grey, "she is a thief. I saw her yesterday put my soup into a bottle, and hide it in her pocket. She did not know I saw her."

The face of the Magnificent for a moment exhibited great agitation. "If this is true," he said, "I will take her away, and send you another on whom I can depend. The colonel spoke of fresh air for you ; do you think you are strong enough to travel ? He gave me some directions about that."

"I don't think I could. He surely did not mean me to go before he came back."

"He left you entirely in my hands, and I must make you well as I said I would."

"Not before he comes back, at any rate, doctor."

"Very well," said he, resuming his gruff manner. "People always know better than their doctors. Good-bye, I shall see you to-morrow."

The next day, in the Pump-room—"She is off, I assure you," said Mr Henshaw, a dyspeptic barrister, with the tongue of a viper; "she was gone this morning, and so was her nurse, and no one knows where, excepting that the Magnificent is gone also."

"Who told you? How do you know?" asked half a dozen tongues at once.

"I shall not give up my authority, I can assure you; but if you step out to Prospect Villa, you will find it to be true."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Sir Bernard Brand, a stout supporter of Lenoir, who had cured him by making him drink lemonade instead of port—"I don't believe a word of it. It's some of that humbug Heathcote's nonsense."

But when the whist tables were set for the evening, behold, the tale was true, and the universal community of Bath were ringing with it. But, to the still greater astonishment of every one, there was the Magnificent,

looking more magnificent than ever, seated in his accustomed place, and glancing benignly from under his swarthy eyebrows.

"Magnificent," said Henshaw, "have you heard what people are saying?"

"Yes, Henny, I have heard it."

"Well, what is the story?"

"They say you are not to have that place in the Customs, because you can't keep a secret."

Henshaw's face grew livid, for the place in the Customs was life or death to him, although he thought no one knew of it. He plucked up courage, however, and retorted: "They want to know what you have done with Mrs De Grey."

"I believe Mrs De Grey has gone to the country for her health. Of course Colonel De Grey is the best authority on that subject."

"Lenoir, I doubt you are a villain," said a voice behind him; and turning round, he saw Dr Heathcote. "I have just seen the colonel, and he is raging at the disappearance of his wife. He says she went away last night, and no one knows where. He was on his way to your house when I met him."

"Dr Heathcote, you jog-trot practitioners judge by the most superficial symptoms," said Lenoir, in the loftiest tone. "I shall see the colonel if he has returned, and to-morrow I shall take occasion to

request an explanation of the epithets which you have used, and the impertinent suggestions of that little lawyer. Meantime, with your leave, I shall finish my rubber."

But the party broke up, and declined to finish the rubber, and the Magnificent took his hat, and walked slowly from the room. His faction retired home in great discomfiture.

Meanwhile Colonel De Grey, in the greatest perturbation, having found his wife gone on his return, and no trace of her, went on to the house of Dr Lenoir. It was a large gloomy mansion, with high walls, and surrounded by trees ; a dim glimmering light shone over the door-way. The colonel's knock was not answered at once, and he thought he heard a window open and shut. At last the door was opened by a thick-set powerful man with one eye.

"Is Dr Lenoir at home?" said the colonel.

"Yes, sir," said the man. "Be kind enough to walk in."

Colonel De Grey entered, and followed the man up-stairs. He thought he heard the outer door locked as he went up.

He was ushered into a strange-looking room, with very little furniture, and a window at the roof, so high as to be beyond reach. The moment he was

in the room the door was violently shut and locked, and he was left in absolute darkness.

He rushed to the door, raged and stormed, bellowed at the top of his voice, but no answer was returned. Half an hour had elapsed, and at last a trap in the ceiling opened, and a light appeared through it.

"The master be coom," said a voice.

"You scoundrel, you and your master shall pay for this."

"The master be coom. Wilt go quietly?"

Another volley of wrath was about to escape from his lips, when he bethought him that his better plan would be at least to feign submission.

"I shall be glad to tell your master what a black-guard he is. I shall do that quietly enough."

On this assurance the trap was closed; and in a few minutes the same one-eyed man, with a companion of equal strength, opened the door and invited the colonel to emerge.

He saw at once that he would have no chance in a struggle, and determined to see the matter out, resolving to use violence if he could not otherwise escape.

Passing through a narrow winding passage a door opened, and he was ushered into a well-furnished sitting-room, and there, seated in an easy-chair, was the imperturbable Magnificent.

The door was closed behind him, and looking round, he could not have told where it was.

Lenoir motioned to him to sit down; but giving no heed to the invitation, he exclaimed—

“What is the meaning of this infamous conduct? Where am I?”

“In a madhouse,” said the doctor, composedly.

“And on what pretence have you decoyed me here, you scoundrel, and where is my wife?”

“Don’t you think,” rejoined the Magnificent in the same tone, “that should your wife die, you had better be mad for a little?”

“What on earth do you mean?” said the colonel. But his face blanched and he sank into a seat.

“Colonel De Grey, I knew you a long time ago. Do you remember Dr Geronimo Spiretti at Padua?”

“Gracious God!” said the colonel.

“I was his assistant when you studied poison under him. I was a lad of sixteen, but you have not changed. Now you know all.”

The wretched man for a moment nearly fainted. He tried to speak, but could make no articulate sound. “Don’t glance at the poker. Killing me would be your own death. Listen—

“I knew you from the first, and I mistrusted you from the first, and but for the sweet woman who is linked to you, and who still trusts you, you should

have met the doom you deserve, as far as I am concerned. But to expose you would kill her.

"I was certain, from Dr Heathcote's account, how the matter stood. I knew you would discontinue your doses while I was there. You thought that was the cause of the recovery, and did not think of Spiretti's antidote.

"I knew the attempt would begin when I was absent. The nurse brought me the poisoned soup. I have had it analysed in my presence by two careful chemists, and the analysis and the subject of it are so bestowed—"Drop that!" he thundered, and dealt De Grey such a blow on the arm as nearly fractured it. He had attempted to seize the poker. The pain of the blow was intense for a moment, but Lenoir gave him a glass of brandy, and proceeded—

"Your wife is where none of Spiretti's recipes will reach her. She believes you have sent her there, and is content. You will now write two letters before you leave the room. One to tell your wife that you are obliged to go abroad for two months, and requesting her to remain where she is until you return; the other to request me to attend her during her absence at her new residence.

"I shall send the two children to her. At the end of two months, unless the last dose was too strong for her shattered system, she will be quite well, and

you may rejoin her. Until that time you had better be—absent.

“One word more. You now know that the Insurance Company, in which you had that policy on your wife’s life, has failed. Perhaps you do not know that Mrs De Grey has succeeded to an annuity of £300 a year from an old friend of her family.

“You stay here for a week, then go quietly to Paris; but mark, if your wife die in any circumstances of mystery, whether I am alive or dead, retribution will hunt you to the ends of the earth.”

“But Virginie—the nurse?” stammered the self-convicted wretch.

“Virginie knows nothing excepting that she did what she was told. She has done stranger things than that without ever asking for reasons. She will never open her lips on the subject. You are perfectly secure, for the chemists had no idea on what their experiments were made.”

Next day the Magnificent was in his place in the Pump-room as usual.

Men looked shy at him, and women looked sly. He was as cool and lofty as ever.

He waited until the room was full, and then taking an opportunity when Heathcote and Henshaw were close to him, he called out, “Mr Henshaw.”

He took no notice. He repeated his call with the

same effect. Lenoir took two strides towards him, and, lifting him by his shoulders, placed him with his back to the pillar, and then said—

“You presumed yesterday to make remarks disparaging to a lady. You will be kind enough now to retract them, or I propose to kick you from one end of this room to the other.”

Pale and affrighted was the little lawyer; but Dr Heathcote interposed :—

“Dr Lenoir, this must not be; I was the accuser yesterday, and you must first deal with me.”

“True, my dear Heathcote, but I mean to deal with each after their kind. You are a gentleman and a man of honour, and as such I intend to treat you. Read that.”

Dr Heathcote read to his intense astonishment the following note :—

BATH, *August 12, 179—*.

MY DEAR LENOIR,—As I am obliged to go to the Continent for two months, I hope you will allow me to leave Mrs De Grey under your charge, should she at her present residence require your advice.—Yours very truly,

F. DE GREY.

“Read it out, doctor,” said Lenoir, and the bewildered man obeyed.

"Now, you slanderous little toad, eat up your calumnies on the spot," said Lenoir to the lawyer.

"I am sure I meant nothing," said he; "I will make you repent these words."

"Eat them up, I say, for the last time." And terribly he looked down on Henshaw.

The latter quailed. "I admit," he said, "they have turned out not to be true."

"And ought not to have been spoken."

"And ought not to have been spoken."

"Go then : and be warned."

"You will hear from me to-morrow, however, for all this."

"I think not," said Lenoir, when he had gone. And he did not; for the purveyor of scandal thought better of it, and transferred his attentions to Scarborough.

"And now, Dr Heathcote, I presume you retract that epithet which you used yesterday. I admit appearances were against me; but a true physician distrusts appearances."

"I forgive the banter, and cheerfully retract the expression; but after what the colonel said, hang me, doctor, if I know what to make of it."

"I never supposed you did," said Lenoir; and the Magnificent reigned in Bath for many years afterwards.

“The gaps in the story you may fill up as suits you best. Lenoir, in his trip to London, had consulted his solicitor, who told the story to my late master. The cautious London lawyer told Lenoir he might be hanged for compounding felony ; and Lenoir told him he might be hanged for his advice. The annuity was, as the solicitor believed, provided by Lenoir himself ; and the surmise was, either that he was in love with the lady or that he knew more of her history than he chose to explain—or probably both. The Colonel and Mrs De Grey never visited Bath again ; but the annuity was paid for many years afterwards, the colonel, probably, being as anxious to keep his wife alive as he had been to destroy her ; and she, poor thing, with the constancy and credulity of women, rejoicing in her inmost soul at the increased tenderness of her husband.”

“Ay, Pemberton, this world would not be fit to inhabit but for the blessings of hypocrisy. How would the belief in the existence of good vanish, if for only five minutes we could see each other as we really are ! As for your Magnificent, he was half Quixote, half Cagliostro, and whole scamp, I take it, ready to let the lady live or die, as best suited his tinsel Magnificence. The London lawyer was quite right. He and the colonel should have swung

together, one for intending murder, the other for concealing and rewarding the intention."

"I think not," said I. "A coarse, stupid man would either have done nothing, and left the lady to destruction, or would have denounced the husband and broken the wife's heart. The Magnificent did it with a masterly hand, firm and tender, as a hero should be."

"It is a good story, and well told. But tell me in confidence what you would have said for the colonel had you been his counsel at the Old Bailey? There would have been an ovation of mendacity."

"Peace to your gibes; let us go out and watch the rain. There was a flash. Ay, now it comes with a rattle." And we finished the evening by sitting in the portico, and enjoying the thunderstorm.

CHAPTER X.

A RAINY DAY.

NEXT day came a deluge of rain, a leaden sky, a howling wind, clouds scudding from the south-east, with a frantic sullenness which held out no hope. The malignant splashes on the window-pane seemed to exult in our dreariness inside.

In this changing world, however, there is nothing so unchanging as the post; and so, in thunder, lightning, and rain, came the letters at breakfast-time to Dagentree Grange.

Dagentree opened his despatches with a growl:

“‘Board of Guardians—Overseers of Weldon cum Baddingly—Allowance to Gregory Stokes.’ Too bad, to feed our fellow-men like dogs, and take pride in it too. I wish the paupers had the upper hand for one day in the year.”

“‘Vote and interest at ensuing election.’ I shall give them neither, but what they neither ask nor wish for—a bit of my mind.”

“‘Giles, the poacher, has escaped.’ Glad of it. I

should like to see Tomkins' face. This will give me the upper hand for a month."

"‘Sir Charles and Lady Dashwood—request honour—Mr Dagentree and Mr Pemberton.’ Sha’n’t go ; what say you, Pemberton ? ”

"I must first look at my own note."

My own note ran thus:—

WENDOVER, *Tuesday.*

DEAR MR PEMBERTON,—Mamma bids me ask whether you and Mr Dagentree would come and lunch here on Friday, and play the return at croquet. Tell Mr Dagentree the widow will not be here, for she is going to the Dashwoods.

I write to you because you are an idle lawyer, and will perhaps answer me.—Yours truly,

SOPHIA WENDOVER.

"Cool!" said Dagentree, "writing to a man she has only seen once in her life."

There was a spice of acid in his tone.

"O foolish hermit," said I, "don't you see that is why she does write to me? But I have a proposal to make. You shall go and play croquet; I will go and meet the widow at the Dashwoods'." So it was settled accordingly.

"Now," said Dagentree, "here is your kingdom for the day. My world of books is at your command.

Use it as you like. I must go and do a little business, a little study, and perhaps, in reward for the 'Magnificent,' cogitate some topic for our evening talk. I like to break my fallacies and paradoxes across your thick skull. I have besides asked Dr Bompas, the rector, to dinner, a sad preacher, but a most amusing and agreeable man."

Between reading, writing, smoking, and sleeping, the day at last wore away: and on descending to the library at seven o'clock I found Dr Bompas. He was a large, somewhat jovial-looking parson, with a twinkle in his eye, and a slight brogue in his speech, which did no injustice to his Hibernian origin. I had understood from Dagentree that his classical attainments were prodigious, and that he had carried off every laurel the university could bestow. If he was somewhat less refined than I had expected, he quite redeemed the character given of him by the vivacity and vigour of his conversation.

After dinner Dagentree said: "I had intended to have written a roundabout paper for you to-day, but could not find a subject, and had but two ideas in my head. Those two ideas, however, had some interest belonging to them. They were—

BREAKFAST AND DINNER.

PART I.—BREAKFAST.

"Listen!" said our host, "while I sing, or say, about breakfast."

"Now that we have had dinner, say away," said Dr Bompas, "but I have my views on the subject also. You do not mean to read that paper to us?"

"Do not be afraid. You shall strike in when you like. I only serve a ball for you, as they do at rackets, and you and Pemberton may keep it up as long as you please."

"Play!" said the doctor.

"The active voice of life may be divided into breakfast and dinner. Lunch is an adjunct of breakfast, as tea is of dinner. Five o'clock tea is an irregular verb, and should be declined"——

"Entirely," said the doctor.

"The passive voice, of which I do not propose to speak, consists of sleep; not that there is not a great deal which might be profitably said about sleep, which has its characteristics quite as well marked as those of waking hours. One man sleeps like a gentleman, another like a hog. If you wish to know a man's real character, look at him as he sleeps. The

expression of the sleeper varies no doubt, but it is a true expression. All a man is and thinks of when awake, is stamped on his slumbering features,—fear, wrath, love, hate, avarice, affection. Waking hours may hide them : but the mind wears no mask in the dominions of Morpheus. Before I choose a man for my friend, I should like to see him asleep.”

“He’ll have a chance with us, if he reads long,” said the doctor in a stage-whisper to me.

“At present, however, I mean to tell you the views of a recluse on the two great divisions of the active voice of life. The day starts with breakfast ; it ends, or it ought to end, with dinner. At breakfast, all is in prospect ; our hopes, intentions, misgivings for the day, are all in the future. It is the youth of the twenty-four hours, full of uncertain anticipation. By dinner-time, the day has run its course ; we have lived that day’s life, and we surrender ourselves to retrospect with what appetite we may.

“I dislike the collective, aggregate breakfast-table, at which the creatures eat in company. Breakfast was meant to be a solitary meal ; for until the human machine is wound up, oiled, and gently set in motion, it is unfitted for social operations. Why should a man speak at breakfast ? Why should he think of anything but repairing the void which long abstinence has made ? Is it meet that he should be expected

to jest at such a time, or laugh spasmodically at the jests of others? Nature cries aloud that she is outraged by so unreasonable a strain on her energies, and I often refuse to tax her so far. It is a sulky, unsocial meal, dedicated to silence and the *Times*."

"You are for breakfast in bed, are you?" broke in the doctor. "I am sure you are not one of them. Who is the fellow who writes a book about breakfast in bed? He deserves to have none."

"Now and then, for a holiday," I suggested, "breakfast in bed is not unpleasant. It is like getting up at five in the morning."

"I agree," said Dagentree, "the kind of fellow who likes to breakfast in bed is of much the same mettle as the habitually early riser. He has no heart. Your early riser gets up for the pleasure of despising his neighbour; and it is wonderful how much pharisaical pride is fostered by the effort. Your breakfasteer in bed lies there to show his scorn and contempt of right-minded men, who wash and dress and shave before ten o'clock. But these are not the stuff of which good fellows or friends are made. One rises sour and chilly; the other nervous and discontented. One has expended all his wholesome energy before the world is awake; the other has lost all the freshness of his vital organism for the day before he begins it."

The Doctor. It is a very doubtful enjoyment at the best, having breakfast in bed. It is luxurious, but still imperfect. Like all human bliss, a drop of bitter mingles in the very fountain of pleasure. The *Times* won't lie straight. The pillow slips from behind your aching neck. You cannot reach the butter without an effort, which capsizes the tea over the muffin, whence, in a broad brown stream, it trickles to the counterpane. It is, after all, but labour and sorrow. The fish slides off its plate; and when at last the meal is ended, and you turn round for a final snooze, your cheek is glued by a drop of honey to the pillow, and your sheets are like a nutmeg-grater, by reason of innumerable crumbs of wandering toast, till your torture is worthy of

“Luke's iron crown, or Damien's bed of steel.”

Dagentree. The retribution is just, and the bitterest drop of all is the sneaking sense of unworthiness, springing from a base attempt to eat your bread in secret. A right-minded man may healthily rise at seven, and breakfast at eight—although there is something rather priggish even in that hour. Nine or half-past nine I approve of, and command none to be later than ten. Then, glowing and good-humoured, you begin, with a pleasant exterior and an easy conscience, the labours of the day.

Pemberton. I wonder how people felt when they

breakfasted at seven in the morning, and went to bed at nine at night. I suspect it was a more natural and healthy life.

Dagentree. You may find it on the Continent where you will. Our late hours, it must be owned, are insular and provincial. When you lounge out of Meurice's, at twelve o'clock, with the bright Parisian sun high above your head, while the fresh-looking matrons and bonnes sit with the children in the gardens of the Tuileries, and take your sauntering way down the boulevards, studded with merry groups at the doors of the *cafés*, your day is only beginning, and you wonder to find the inhabitants of a great city so idle. You call to mind the roar and hum and hideous money-making hurry of the Strand and Fleet Street, and contrast it with the easy-going, light-hearted gaiety of the metropolis of pleasure. But if you think that Paris does not work hard, and grasp after money-making like the keenest of you, you are mistaken. The business day in Paris is over before yours begins. From six to eleven are their hours of work. They are as long as from ten to three, and much more undisturbed; and then, his labour finished, the Parisian pursues recreation as the other and more important object of life. But, unlike our dyspeptic Pharisees, he seeks his couch early, and takes his full share of sleep.

One sees the merit of this system in its result. Our British merchant, or our British lawyer, like Pemberton there, has no time to devote to the cultivation of pleasure. All his daylight hours are consecrated to Plutus. What he calls pleasure, if it come at all, is courted in the shape of indigestible dinners, consumed at unnatural midnight hours; or he looks for her, amid many others, as sombre as himself, packed into a few square yards in Eaton Square or South Kensington. All this is unhealthy, and, what is worse, is dull and dreary, bad for the English brain, and makes John Bull appear the disagreeable fellow all the world believes him to be.

The Doctor. I will tell you a little episode which befel me in foreign parts, which to this day I cannot think of without a creeping horror, and which has given me a lasting antipathy to these outlandish ways.

THE GHOST OF GHENT.

It is now a good many years ago—when you, my friends, were being birched at Harrow, all for your good, and doubtless too little of it—that I obtained a travelling scholarship at Balliol. It was after Gladstone and Sidney Herbert's time, and after Pusey, Froude, and Newman's.

Proud I was, an unknown Irishman, of being sent

abroad to see the world at the expense of my college, and started, of course, with the full conviction that it was mine oyster, and that I should open it by my wits.

I was not then *teres atque rotundus*, as the good things of Weldon cum Baddingly have since made me. I was slim, gaunt and angular, and had the longest legs, and the tallest and thinnest figure in Oxford. I was crammed to the roof with classics, and was utterly innocent of the slightest knowledge of the world, my fellow men, or any modern language under the sun.

I bought a Murray, and my third day's pilgrimage landed me at Ghent. A charming, mediæval, sleepy town, which the remembrance of the incident I am about to mention has associated with most unpleasant thoughts.

The hotel at which I put up—it was the Grand Monarque, or some such name—was an old, ghostly, wooden-staircased, many-passaged, tobacco-scented hostelry. I had dined on my journey, and having secured my room, I sallied out in an August evening, intending to have a bit of supper on my return.

It was but shortly after nine when I regained the hotel. The streets, I had remarked, were ominously still, and on arriving at my quarters, I found the doors shut and saw no symptom of life within. After making a noise, which anywhere but in Ghent would

have roused the seven sleepers, but of which no one outside took the slightest heed, I heard scuttling sounds, and the door was stealthily unbarred, and a native of doubtful sex—for his, her, or its habiliments left that uncertain—holding a dim oil lamp in its hand, reluctantly gave me admission. The door was shut and barred behind me, and before I could utter a word the grim feature disappeared, muttering some guttural sounds, entirely unintelligible to me. There I was left, at the foot of the gaunt staircase, in utter darkness, without the slightest idea in what direction my room lay. To add to my comfort, I knew the house to be full of swells, as they would now be called, as I had read a long list of them in the travellers' book.

I yelled aloud in English for the waiter. A mocking echo from the passages above was all the answer I received. I was young, horribly shy, and morbidly conceited, and the notion of being the hero of a Comedy of Errors was appalling. Visions of high-born heads peeping over the banisters in wrath or in derision made me resolve to be silent. It occurred to me that the door of my room must be open, while those which were occupied would be shut. Groping therefore, as best I could, up the creaking staircase, and feeling along the passage, I at last came to an open door, and inwardly praising my presence of

mind and sagacity, I entered boldly. But I had not taken three steps before a smothered shriek was heard, and a gruff voice roared out, "*Qu'as-tu là, coquin ?*" Horrified, I retreated my three steps hurriedly, and regained the covert of the dark passage just in time to hear the door angrily shut and bolted. My position was more hopeless than ever.

There was no saying what might happen if I tried that experiment again, and yet, to spend the night on a Belgian staircase seemed to promise neither dignity nor comfort. I then bethought me that I had, in a little tinder box, some cigar fusees, of the ancient German type, and a wax taper ; and much provoked that I had not thought of this before, I endeavoured to obtain a light. But as every one knows who ever tried the experiment, it is not easy to light a candle with a fusee. It bursts into flame, but before your trembling fingers can apply it to the wick, it is out ; and after exhausting my whole stock of matches, filling the staircase with a strong sulphureous odour, and nearly setting the old boards on fire by the smouldering tinder, I was left in the darkness of despair.

I regained the staircase. *Acheronta movebo*, I said, in my extremity ; I will plunge into the depths. Long I took to find my way to a subterranean passage, which was the scene of my deliverance, I

cannot tell. It seemed like a long hideous night. At last a piercing scream was uttered close to me. Then I heard a fall like that of a carpet-bag. Then came a rushing to and fro of many feet, and at last, to my intense joy, a light. I should not have cared had it disclosed a cellar full of demons, so glad was I to escape from that phantom darkness.

The feet were those of waiters and chambermaids. The fall that of a plump English lady's maid. I pass by the first confusion, the Babel of tongues, and the surprise which my appearance there created. The bearer of the light fortunately spoke English, and to him, not too credulous, I confided my woes. The unfeigned indignation of my tone satisfied him : and he got me a candle and showed me my room.

The immediate cause of my rescue was absurd enough, although nearly attended with serious consequences to the unfortunate Betty, who was found in strong hysterics, and had hardly recovered by next morning. It seems that in my fruitless attempts to light my taper I had covered my fingers with phosphorus from the matches ; and my constant gesticulations in the dark had rubbed it over my dress. The apparition of a lean figure, nearly seven feet high, glowing in the dark passage with unearthly light, was enough to upset stronger nerves than Betty's.

Dagentree. Betty thought you

“ A spirit, too, and bright
With something of an angel's light.”

Doctor. Probably, with a various reading. But you will not now wonder that I hate early hours. I went off to St Petersburg next day, and found that the story had arrived there before me with many additional embellishments; and nowhere in all the grand tour could I escape the detestable popularity of the GHOST OF GHENT.

Dagentree. To resume my dissertation. I hate a country house breakfast, with a dining-room full of people. The quiet domestic town breakfast, if well appointed, is endurable. It is pleasant to see fresh, happy, contented-looking girls, with real smiles on their faces, and nothing of the pillow in their voices, assemble round the breakfast-table, with no blank chair left for any lazy Banquo to occupy. But a breakfast party of a dozen or fifteen ill-assorted beings is often truly revolting. The inmates of the menagerie I spoke of the other day are never so unpleasant as at their morning meal. Even their aspect has changed since last evening. The smiling Laura is solemn. The nods and becks and wreathed smiles with which the Dowager retired to rest have vanished, and yield to snappish devotion to buttered toast.

Why does Captain Clavering answer the charming Nelly in monosyllables? and why does the young squire, who was so tender last night, talk farming down the table to the old squire this morning? Everything goes wrong. When the captain's tingling nerves are a trifle soothed by tea and chicken-pie, and he tries to renew his attentions, the charming Nelly is deep in a consultation with Laura on some recondite point of feminine adornment, and the captain cannot get in a word. He sits with his eyes and mouth half-open, looking as foolish as a sensible man will do, when he wants to talk, and is snubbed. He had made up his mind last night to speak in earnest, but he is fast relapsing ; and is not sure that it would not be better to go for a week's cub-hunting to Bob Tracy at Ashcourt.

Doctor. There is some truth in what you say, Dagentree, but you are too bitter. When you begin to surround your own table with bright faces belonging to yourself, you will feel very differently, and find a pleasure in a chattering group, which your sulky breakfast-table never knew. You remember the picture of a beaming tutelary genius, lithe but finely rounded, with loves of boots, and half-coquettish petticoat under her looped dress, stepping bravely through the snow on her errand of kindness to the village, beauty and goodness and freshness on her

morning face. Many are the breakfast-tables in our English homes of which such visions are the sunshine. Would you have the ladies as well as the men breakfast alone, or exchange the cheerful greeting of a circle of such companions, for the dreary selfishness of a Parisian morning, or the scrambling of a Yankee hotel? You forget, as Benedict did, that you may live to be married.

Dagentree. I do not forget any of the ills which flesh is heir to. When I do quit my sober senses I shall probably profess many follies, and act many hypocrisies, from which my freed soul at present protects me. But I will not talk ever of ladies. What of man, in the masculine, as he appears in his breakfast condition, when he comes down of a morning to look for his food? Is there a manly soul that would not rather find the breakfast-room empty? Of course, a gentleman will face any terrors where the gentler sex is concerned; but usually the mind of man is taciturn until his morning meal is over.

There are no doubt exceptions, but they are generally an obnoxious class. I have seen a chirping chattering sparrow of a man, fresh in colour, dapper in person, with a provoking idiotic and perennial chuckle, which not the death of his best friend would dissipate, who prides himself on keeping up conversation, as he calls it, amid a sombre and subdued

fraternity, and whose impenetrable self-complacency alone prevents him from seeing that the general wishes of the company would consign him to some place where he would cease to smile. But nothing moves him. The forced laugh of Laura, the grim and awful solemnity of Nelly, and Captain Clavering's ferocious scowl, have no effect whatever on his well-tempered armour. The thin but noisy stream continues on its course, saying everything it should not say, suggesting everything it is awkward or unpleasant or ill-timed to suggest, with a hideous and irritating liveliness which, like Malvolio's grimaces, would tempt one to hurl things at him.

Doctor. Well hit off, indeed. I know the vain, garrulous bird, and have had a shot at him before now. But I know a worse infliction. He is usually an *habitué*, an *ami de maison*, a led captain, a kind of domesticated stock man, who spends his life in his friends' country houses, making himself universally useful and disagreeable. These parasites are found everywhere, and when they once get hold, it is in vain to try to dislodge them. They rule the court, the camp, the grove, much more supremely than love does. This creature always gets up early; it suits its nature and its interests. The miseries and indignities which the man is forced to undergo do not deter him. The wind may be easterly, every window

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and door open, draughts of the most piercing and deadly chilliness may pour from every quarter on his devoted head. Here Jane with her broom sweeps him out of the library in a cloud of dust. There Sally runs right against him with a shovelful of blazing cinders. He finds the upper footman gossiping with the under housemaid in the drawing-room. Jeames stares 'aughtily at him, and continues his flirtation without the slightest recognition of his presence. All these things, however, he endures, for it is a phase of the domestic world which is generally unknown, and his knowledge may become power one day. If driven out by stress of weather, he pokes about the stables or pries into the melon frames, and finds everything, as he hoped, in the precise condition in which it was not meant to be seen. Then the fiend returns and prates of the morning air and dew-drops on the grass.

Dagentree. One phase of breakfast we have forgotten, I mean the town breakfast, to which one is invited by literary friends, to eat plovers' eggs and early strawberries, and talk one's wisest. The institution is associated with great names; but it is a word of fear to me. To trundle from St James's Street to Hyde Park Gardens, at an early hour, with the certainty that you will be set down beside a fat Frenchman, and have your nerves and appetite de-

stroyed and your temper soured for the day, is a trial of friendship which I have stood with firmness, but which it were not prudent often to repeat.

Pemberton. I know a man of our inn, Eversley Jones, who was once an afflicting illustration of what may befall one who goes out to breakfast. His father was an old friend of a distinguished M.P., not less celebrated for his kindness than for his breakfasts. Now, Eversley Jones had received his first brief, and an invitation to breakfast at Russell Square. The consultation and the breakfast were fixed for the same day—Sir John's at half-past ten, the Attorney-General at half-past twelve. So Jones thought nothing could have suited better, and started from the Temple at ten o'clock, thinking it ungracious to forestall in any way the hospitality of the baronet. He arrived, and was received with cordiality and kindness, but he saw no signs either of guests or breakfast. About eleven, one or two men dropped in, and gradually he became aware that the compliment paid him was even greater than he had suspected, and that certain magnates were to honour the entertainment. He was proud, but he was also hungry. Half-past eleven, no signs. A quarter to twelve, and the august guests arrive. Twelve o'clock, five, ten minutes past. He has only time to reach the Temple, and as the party defile into the break-

fast-room, Jones rushed, famishing and wild, to his consultation on the wings of a hansom. As ill luck would have it, he had to wait an hour for the Attorney-General. Then exhaustion had driven his case out of his head. He answered his leader's questions at random; disgusted his employer, and sneaked home to his chambers in a state of starvation and annoyance not to be described.

Dagentree.

"Bear me, some god, oh ! quickly bear me hence "

to some Highland hostelry, to breezy Braemar, or beauteous Glengarry, or lone Loch Fannich, or the wilds of Sutherland; bring me to the odours of peat fires. Spread before me the fresh kipper, the frizzling rasher, the new-laid eggs, and leave me to breakfast amid the moors. There one may sleep as sleeps the hunter of deer, and see on rising the mists floating along the cliffs of Wyvis, or lying like a fairy feather bed on the bosom of Loch Garry; and there one may breakfast like a man. True, you may succeed in those regions in being left with nothing to eat; but that is in itself a new sensation to pampered Sybarites.

Doctor. Pass the claret; one may find nothing to drink nearer home, it would seem.

Dagentree. Finish the bottle, doctor, and we shall have another to help us to consider the rest of the active voice.

CHAPTER XI.

A RAINY DAY.

PART II.—DINNER.

THE morning repast is over : and whether it be consumed in court or cabin, in society or in solitude, by lounging club-man of the Albany, or weather-beaten clod-hopper of the fields, sitting by the lane side, his little grand-daughter by his knee, waiting and prattling until the tin pitcher is empty, and it is time for her to trot home with it, I hope all are the better of it. Ah ! woe is me for the man whose heart is too sad, or too low, to eat breakfast, and who is launched unprovisioned on the cold work of the world. Amid the well-fed wayfarers who jostle him on every side, he is pretty sure to go to the wall. A worn and fainting spirit has not a chance unless its tenement of clay be reasonably sustained. If it fail at breakfast the contest is over. It may haul down the flag and surrender.

Now, however, the matutinal prologue is spoken. The play has begun,—comedy, tragedy, farce, grave and gay, high life and low life. All the parts which

feverish mortals act have been crowded into those eight or ten hours which we call a day : and now for the epilogue of dinner. Back come the players with whom we parted in the morning, to wind up the performance. But very different are they from the group which sat round the breakfast-table, or the hermits who devoured their solitary meal. Captain Clavering, refreshed by a bracing day's shooting, you would hardly recognise as the growling, taciturn recluse who would not speak to Nelly in the morning. He is gallant, exuberant, and joyous, in all the splendour of radiant linen, rich and rare, though unobtrusive, studs, and the quiet perfection of his evening toilet. Mamma is brilliant with smiles and the newest of head-dresses : and as to Laura and Nelly, as they sail in under the mild refulgence of the anteprandial light, surely never alighted on this earth a more delightful vision.

All hail, dinner of the Britons ! "thou great god of our idolatry." Other nations eat, nay, fare sumptuously. Philippe and the Trois Frères have meat and cooks not to be rivalled. But they know not what it is to dine in the sense of the British constitution. Dinner brings us, like Hesperus, all good things—home to the wanderer, to the wearied rest. Does a country cousin come with a note from your aunt ? Of course you ask him to dinner. Do you meet a

friend fresh from the Antipodes, whom you have not seen for thirty years? You have nothing to say to each other, but you ask him to dinner. Has an old acquaintance grown shy of you? Have you had a little difficulty with a comrade? You meet unexpectedly, colour up to the temples, and stammer out unmeaning, preposterous words, but you have asked him to dinner, and you are the dearest friends on earth. Has a patriot done great things for his country? Has a general saved her in the field? Not for them the laurel or the civic crown; what can a grateful nation do but invite them to dinner? Sacred, then, be the solemn rite. *Favete linguis*—tread gently the carpeted ante-room of the temple; let your voice be soft and low, and wait with subdued reverence the opening of the folding doors, and the splendours of the feast.

Doctor. If breakfast be a solitary meal, dinner is unquestionably gregarious. All men hate to dine alone. It is as bad as drinking alone—an incongruous and unwholesome thing. The petals of the mind may be closed at breakfast-time, but under the bright and cheery beams of dinner they expand like a convolvulus at noon. What about the hour to dine? A very important question.

Dagentree. I desire not to be dogmatic on that matter, but to dine at dinner-time, and be content.

Nevertheless, I greatly incline to the supper of the ancients, or dinner of the moderns, because therewith ends the working day. The storms and struggles of the day—corroding Care,

“ Grim-visaged, comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow’s piercing dart,”

which beset the furrowed brow, in the counting-house or the study, vanish at the sound of the dinner gong. There is nothing left to do but to dine. No vista of vexing duty, no background of distasteful toil, bounds the genial prospect. It is the epilogue, and then the curtain drops over the weary players. An eight o’clock dinner, therefore, I recommend, and I do it every day. But whatever be the dinner hour, punctuality is the soul of it. There is no greater impertinence which a man can commit than being too late for dinner.

Pemberton. Excepting being too soon.

Doctor. Ah! that “too soon” has had its own share of luck in the world. Why should “too late” be chalked up on melancholy walls, and made the burden of howling ditties, while “too soon” is to escape altogether? What has “too late” ever done which “too soon” has not also to answer for? Despair seizes you if you are too late for the train, but you take no account of that large portion of human life wholly consumed on miserable platforms

by "too soon." If you had waited, perhaps your old flame would have put aside her weeds and accepted you. But you must needs be in a hurry, and "too soon" has extinguished your chance for ever.

Dagentree. Or you have stalked a monarch of the forest, through a long weary day, grovelling on your hands and knees after a long-legged kilted gillie, through morass and fen, over rocks and boulders, crawling through the long tangled heather, and at last you are close to him. "Not yet," says Donald, but "now" says "too soon:" crack goes your rifle, and off goes the stag. Your whole day's labour has been lost, through the influence of the demon.

Doctor. Talking of dinner, did I ever tell you how Phelim O'Carroll did not dine with the archbishop? If not, perhaps you will not object to a true tale of

TOO SOON.

Phelim O'Carroll is now a reverend dean in a cathedral town in Ireland, and may be a bishop or an archbishop himself some day. But when Phelim was in deacon's orders, he went to London on a jaunt, and took with him a letter to the archbishop—he is dead years ago—and he left it and his card, as in duty bound, in Upper Brook Street, and the archbishop sent him an invitation to dinner.

Now, the archbishop, though a grave, decorous,

dignified prelate, and somewhat stern of aspect when on duty, was as full of fun and frolic in his heart as any Phelim among them, and was the last man to play the bashaw or starch his neckcloths in his own house. But Phelim was in the clouds with delight and glory when he got that card. For a fortnight before the appointed day did he worship it, carrying it about with him wherever he went, and looking at the august name in close proximity to his own with a devoted awe, mingled with a sense of coming greatness. The day before the event was to come off, however, as he was reading the magic scroll in a hansom cab, a gust of wind blew it from his grasp, and he saw it no more.

Next morning, as he lay thinking that the revolving earth had brought round the great day at last, the question suddenly flashed on him—What was the dinner hour? Phelim had never dined with a great man before. His father, the Galway squireen, was of Hibernian and primitive habits; and although he had read the mystic number over and over again, he had read it until he had forgotten it. The only impression it had made was, that it was something so unusual as to be quite in keeping with the tremendous nature of the rest of the communication. Was it six, or was it half-past six, or could it be seven? He found no end in wandering mazes

lost. He might call and ask, but that would look rustic and careless ; so he compromised the matter, and knocked boldly at his grace's door at half-past six.

He had to wait some minutes before he was admitted ; and the opening of the door was preceded by a scuffling and tittering in the passage. A footman, with one arm in his coat and the other in the act of entering the sleeve, bestowed on him such a look of freezing insolence as a West-end flunkey alone can bestow. Phelim's heart sank somewhat within him : but he was not the sort of fellow to be brow-beat by a flunkey ; so he walked in as if he was master of the house, and was shown, unannounced, into the drawing-room. A housemaid of doubtful tidiness was in the act of lighting the fire ; and on his approach, gathered up her insignia hastily, and scuttled away like a startled rat. The door was shut ; and the fatal fact was only too plain—he had come “too soon.”

It was a bitter evening in London April, with a pinching east wind, fog, and every atmospheric misery. The windows were open, and Phelim did not dare to shut his grace's windows ; round and round his cage he walked, learned three or four pictures by heart ; counted the medallions on the carpet one way, then counted them the other ;

peered into a bowl of gold fish on the table, and turned over every book he could find. Twice, with a beating heart, did he hear the drawing-room door open; but it was only to admit an inquisitive head, which, on the pretence of ignorance that there was any one there, wanted to see what was shut up in the drawing-room. At last, he heard a sound of merry voices and rapid steps—the door burst open, and in rushed, at full speed, a young lady, with an elderly gentleman at her heels, in uproarious frolic. The lady, as she fled, with her head averted, came plump into Phelim's arms, who in his turn capsized the gold fish, and with his superincumbent burden fell, crashing the bowl in his descent.

How he escaped from the house, he never could explain; but it is certain that he did not dine with the archbishop, and that he was laid up for a week in Manchester Buildings with troublesome glass cuts.

Many years afterwards, as he was dining with a barrister in Dublin, and sitting next the lady of the house, she turned to her other neighbour, and asked him to help the salmon, "For," she said, with a smile, "Mr O'Carroll is unlucky with fish." Then she reminded him of his disaster, and told the story with great point, softening some of the incidents, however, to spare Phelim's blushes and her own. And a man who heard it told it to me.

Dagentree. The difference, however, is that "too soon" may often be repaired, but "too late" never. I confess, hermit as I am, to liking a pleasant dinner party. It is the only thing I look back to with pleasure in my London life. As to the eating and drinking part of it, I am comparatively, not positively, indifferent, and would rather not dine at all than talk about or criticise my food; so that the edible be hot, and the potable be sound, I am content; although, to tell the truth, these simple requisites are of the rarest. Still they are not nearly so rare as well-assorted guests. A party of eight or ten intelligent men and pretty women is a very refreshing way of ending a day of industry, whether the toil has consisted in using time, or in killing it. Why pretty women? you may ask. Not for their good looks, I assure you: but pretty women generally converse with more ease than plain women. They are more accustomed to their position, and have more confidence in themselves.

Doctor. I do not agree with you in that proposition, and when you are as old as I am you will change your opinion. It may be true among boys and girls, but not with men and women. A plain girl, talking to a *parti* like you, is often depressed and shy. But a woman of sense, whose looks are not attractive,

lays herself out to make up for it by other advantages; and many of the pleasantest women I have ever known had features which, but for their intelligence, had nothing to recommend them. For my part, I like to watch the play of an animated ugly face. The earnest and intelligent spirit breaks through the ungenial tenement of clay, and lights it up with a marvellous radiance.

Dagentree. Each to his taste; mine inclines to beauty, and married beauty, for a dinner party; for marriage gives dignity and ease. But it is sad to think how few men—diners-out especially—try to be agreeable without reference to what others may think of them.

Pemberton. As far as my scanty experience goes, I think the Frenchman is our superior in that respect. He studies the art of pleasing, not that his self-love may be flattered by your good opinion, but as a part of the science of living. If a stranger feels awkward, or ill at ease, he feels his own credit at stake; he has failed in a duty, and hastens to repair his fault. Whereas, if your Englishman does exert himself to please, it is frequently to feed his own self-complacency, to think how well he is talking, and how pleasant the party must think him.

Doctor. By one sure symptom you may with certainty detect the lurking vanity in the breast of the

diner-out. If you find him anxious to promote conversation in others, then he is of the true mettle. If he is impatient of the voices of those around him, set him down for an impostor who only cares for the sound of his own.

Dagentree. I hate lions, unless they are very big ones; your scientific lion of the smaller breed, most of all, especially when dashed with a spice of infidelity. What a bore such a one can be! How he twists and turns the topics of the table, that he may find a stepping-stone to mount his hobby from, and how wearily he rides it, jolting over the stony ground, until, in sheer exhaustion, the party leave the road clear! Of course, in the best circles, such intruders are duly punished; for they always find some well-bred man who knows more than they do, and who inserts, without an effort, and with a quiet smile on his face, his sharp stiletto under the fifth rib. I have seen the victim of the operation writhe like a beetle with a pin through its back, during the rest of the evening, transfixed by the fatal dart. But in the ordinary rounds to which you and I belong, these pedants are asked for their roaring, and we are expected to

“Wonder with a foolish look of praise.”

Doctor. Dinner-talk is a great science. In my time I have known some of its great professors in

whose hands it was a charming power. I have met M——, and listened to him by the hour, as if he was the *genie* just ascended from his copper vase, pouring forth all the stores of thought he had accumulated during his sojourn there. It was magnificent, if it was not quite conversation, and sent you home with your mind inebriated with imagery, and with a profound conviction of your own littleness. Of Sydney Smith I may say, “*Virgilium vidi tantum* ;” he probably was the greatest of all—and Rogers also I once encountered. Some of our living great ones too I have known. But these were like going to the play, and were too exciting for ordinary consumption. I like a man with a quiet, well-modulated voice, with a quick but refined sense of the ridiculous, a rapid insight into his neighbour’s brain, and a real love of humouring and playing into his neighbour’s current of thought—who takes up unimportant topics and returns them with a point without a barb—who can talk and eat at the same time, and who never seems to ask you to listen to him. Such a man, if well-informed, with cultivated tastes, reading, and knowledge of the world, is he in whose company I should wish to dine.

Dagentree. It is an offence and an impertinence in any but the giants of the world to attempt to predominate at the dinner-table. He who would rule

there, must never seem to rule. I love, when I encounter a self-sufficient talker, who thinks he has a talent for the kind of thing, to watch my opportunity when he is fairly under weigh, and drive my lumbering vehicle right across his donkey-cart, by introducing in a voice, loud, but unconscious, some commonplace on a subject far remote. It is ill-bred, I admit, and the sinner must be notorious to justify it; but covert smiles from an emancipated circle have often rewarded me for the discipline. The man who acquires real power over that empire must be true, kindly, and genial, anxious to give pleasure, desirous to avoid all that can give pain—inspired, in short, with a wish to be happy in the enjoyment of those around him. I am not sure that I know such a man.

Pemberton. I have known some clever men eminently disagreeable companions after dinner, from an underbred idea that the soul of wit is to make your friend uncomfortable. Of course, when assailed, one must return the thrust; but such contests are bad for digestion, and the offender, who is generally a *parvenu*, should not be asked again.

Dagentree. Perhaps he may be a lawyer. But far from the altar of dinner be disputation. I never heard a proposition at such a time I would not willingly concede rather than dispute about it. I would believe all things, or surrender all things, sooner than

brush the surface by what Cowper calls an animated "No." Controversy is for the morning, or for the House of Commons. The dining-room is a Conciliation Hall, into which contention never should enter.

Let the curtain fall—the play is played out.

CHAPTER XII.

PHOTOGRAPHY.

NEXT day we were to make our respective expeditions: Dagentree to lunch at Wendover, and I to dine, and meet the redoubtable widow, at the Dashwoods'.

In the morning I was much amused with my friend's struggle between shyness and philosophy—the grandeur of his air of indifference, and the sneaking complacency at the prospect. I tried a little gentle banter on the charms of the fair Sophia, but found that the attempt inspired an amount of solemn dignity which warned me off the ground. So I turned to my own prospects, and began to speculate on whom the Dashwoods might have to meet me.

“I explained to you the resources of the country yesterday,” said my host. “A stray man from town, like yourself, a pursebound sporting man, or a wandering judge of assize, will be the garnish: but the substantial part of the feast will be provided

from the materials we surveyed from Praslington Common."

"If they furnish anything as pleasant as the Wendenover croquet party," said I, "I shall be fortunate. To a man who only dines in the Temple, and surveys no one but his brethren from morning to night, you cannot imagine what attraction there is in meeting, not lawyers, but the rest of mankind."

"And then, the mysterious widow. Are you sure she did not come from the Salt Lake?"

"You at least know nothing of her. Remember how nearly I brought the showman to grief yesterday. You must learn that part better before you play it again."

"I shall take an hour or two with the rod before I ride over. There must be mighty trout up. So good digestion to you, and good temper with it, which, as far as I see, is much required."

With these gruff words, but with his wonted open smile, he left me. I had resolved on devoting the day to the great work in which I was engaged, illustrative of the interesting and exciting topics contained in the History, Theory, and Practice of the Law of Real Property.

My labours made progress, as they generally do in such circumstances. I read Lord St Leonards, and wrote the thoughts of Pemberton thereon for

upwards of an hour, disturbed only by the hum of the bees around the window, and the song of the birds outside. After that, my attention and industry began to flag, and my thoughts to wander. I began to scrawl, "With you, Mr Pemberton. Mr Pemberton, with papers, 50 g^{uas}, Pemberton, Q.C., Sir Eustace Pemberton, Rt. Hon. Lord Pemberton," and a variety of other day-dreams, on the blotting-paper. I then, in deep meditation, sketched a variety of well-known legal heads—among which, indiscriminately interspersed, appeared sundry profiles not unlike Sophia Wendover. I was roused from this interesting reverie by the respectable head of Briggs, informing me that his master had started, and inquiring when I should like to have lunch. I flung away my blotting-paper in convicted shame ; but too much perturbed to settle down to my work, I began to make a survey of the library. Well it repaid me. The editions were scarce, the condition perfect, the bindings ecstatic. There was the true Elzevir Virgil, with the red letters, and the miscounted page, and with a margin of wonderful width. There was the large paper Homer of the Foulis. There were all the Baskerville classics, unstained, in sumptuous morocco. There was the *Chiromancy* of Albertus Magnus, and Michael Scott, and the first edition of *Drunken Barnaby*, and a host of bibliographical

marvels besides. At last I came on a priceless Rabelais, and sat down on the top round of the library ladder to read him, Lord St Leonards and contingent remainders being utterly banished from memory.

Happening to cast up my eyes, or rather from the elevation at which I sat, to cast them down, I perceived a figure standing among the flower-beds beneath, and looking with an air, half-abashed and half-impudent, at the house. I descended from my altitude, and on going to the window, thought I recognised the younger of the two travellers I had met in the train the day before. While I was ruminating on what his motive or errand could be, the mystery was solved by his suddenly producing a photographic camera, and proceeding with the usual mysterious manipulation of his craft.

A wandering photographer is so common an apparition in these days, that the presence of one on the terrace would of itself have created no surprise. But taken in connection with the conversation I had overheard, the appearance of the stranger in this capacity struck me as singular and incongruous. I began to wonder whether his rays of light, and positive proofs, of which I had heard him speak, might not after all be merely terms of art. It was possible. I could remember nothing which was said absolutely inconsistent with this supposition. Still, his presence

troubled me, and while his head was enveloped in his drapery, I threw open the sash, stepped up to him, and was by his side before he was aware of my approach.

The startled expression which came across his face when, on withdrawing his head from its covering, he found me at his elbow, was sufficiently diverting. It plainly indicated to me that he thought no one was at home. Whether he recognised me at first I could not tell, but I had little doubt he did. He immediately, and with a jaunty courtesy, hoped he was not intruding, and explained in a nasal accent, which I had not observed in the carriage, that he was taking photographic views of the county-seats, and was collecting subscriptions for a work illustrative of the district.

I said I was only a visitor ; but had no doubt Mr Dagentree would not object to so laudable an enterprise, and suggested that it would have been better if he had announced his approach.

He went on rather volubly to describe the attentions he had received at other houses, and pulling out a prospectus, requested to have the honour of my name and influence for the work.

I laughed, and declined the favour, telling him that I was more in need of patrons than he was. He received back his books with an expression which

was intended for disappointment, but with a twinkle in his eye which rather belied it. I asked him to show me his sketches.

"Haven't got the fixins here," said he; "but I'll trouble you to find me housing in the coal-cellar."

I thought it a strange and modest request; but before I could reply, Briggs, his highly respectable white locks streaming in the breeze, appeared at the open window, with a stern look of outraged propriety on his countenance.

"Wait a flash," said my friend, and in an instant he had withdrawn one slide, put in another, and in a minute emerged again from his covering with a self-satisfied smirk on his countenance.

"Trapped him this time," he muttered, as if to himself; and then turning to me, again demanded a retreat in the coal-cellar.

"Lord save you! sir, we must work in the dark," he said, observing my perplexed expression. "Ask the old gentleman to let me have my chemicals there."

There was no help for it. It was plain he had already established his head-quarters in the coal-cellar without leave asked, and that the unexpected arrival of myself and Briggs had detected him. But as his object seemed sufficiently reasonable, and being myself a good-natured man, I spoke a good word for

the wandering artist to the wrathful Briggs, and obtained a growling assent to the temporary and humble asylum.

"Low cattle, they be, them painting chaps. I shall keep my eye on the gemman, I promise you, sir."

They accordingly disappeared together, and I went back, in form at least, to contingent remainders, with a lingering misgiving in my mind for which I could not account. The fellow was fair-spoken enough; his occupation was a natural one, and his manner seemed frank, although impudent. But still, his unannounced visit, and the recollection of the few words I had overheard on the railway, made Lord St Leonards more misty than ever.

In a little while re-entered Briggs, with a face of portent, "Do you think that gemman lucky, sir?—I never seed the like,—he is making picters out of nothin'. He go washin' and washin' a bit o' glass with nothin' at all on it, with a candle end a-lighting on him in the coal-cellar, and then comes the picter in black and white, as though a fairy had drawed it. It beats me, it does. Come you and see, sir, how he has made the old house."

Briggs's introduction to the world of science and art in the coal-cellar had evidently awed him. I quite sympathised with his admiration and wonder;

for although the art is now one of the commonest of marvels, I never see that amazing disclosure of the sun-picture without an intense feeling of interest. The science is still in its infancy. We may be surrounded by photographs, for aught we know, and the means of rendering them visible may yet be discovered. So I followed the steps of the enthusiastic neophyte to the dark abode of his preceptor.

"Good light," said the artist. "These two are pretty sharp, and will, I think, print well."

He held up the two negatives to the candle, and they seemed to deserve his praise. But in one of them I saw the secret of Briggs's reverential amazement.

They were two views of the western front of the house, taken from the terrace; and right in the centre of one of them—portly, haughty, and scornful to the life—was Briggs, not as though sitting for his portrait certainly, but awful and dignified as nature and education had made him. He could not restrain a chuckle as he saw me looking at it.

"A rum start that, sir," said he, in default of more appropriate terms.

"Upon my word—a great success," said I; "a capital likeness, Briggs, and in your proper place, too."

"Well, sir, it do go to my heart to see me a-standin'

by the old house so natural-like. The gentleman says he will give it to me to hang up in the pantry when it is printed, as he calls it."

"Willingly," said the artist, "if Mr Briggs will sit again ; and, if I might make bold to ask it, would you, sir, help in the foreground ?"

There is something which appeals to the most ignoble part of man's vanity in being asked to sit for your picture ; but it is always sure to be pleasant, as the likeness, when taken, is to displease. But on this occasion I resisted, and returned to my work, all my doubts having vanished ; and Briggs, and the footman, and all the maids, and the coachman, and the groom, had a photographic *séance*, which lasted several hours.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RIDE WITH M'CLELLAN.

THE afternoon was bright and sunny ; and after some more successful attempts to address myself to the mysteries of real property, I sallied forth to enjoy the delicious breeze, and bask among the flowers. I found my artistic friend packing up his camera, and preparing to depart, evidently not depressed by the hospitality of Briggs, and much disposed to conversation. Briggs, he said, was quite a gentleman, and had sat to him like a rock. He was also complimentary and pointed in his praise of the fairer part of the establishment—to the nymphs and dryads of Dagentree. I walked along with him down the avenue of old elms which formed the approach.

“Are you from the States?” said I.

“I am from many States,” he said, nasally, as on our first meeting ; “but blessed if I know which I last came from.”

“I am sure you lived in America by your pronun-

ciation of the language. You must have learned it there."

"I rather think I have, among a collection of the sweepings of creation. You may call it a choice assortment from all the foreign markets—Jews and Christians and Turks, Poles and Germans, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, and Irish and niggers; guess it's a consolidated empire, anyhow."

"Cracked a little at present," I said.

"It will splice the easier. It's like a pot of treacle, you may take out a ladleful, but it all joins again. I have seen three armies spread-eagled and obliterated, but they always reappeared."

"What! did you serve in the war?"

"No, sir, I never served; I only commanded my own company."

"Which of the armies were you attached to?"

"Faith, there was little attachment in the case—no love lost, as they say. I commanded a troop of specials on M'Clellan's line."

"A corps of specials! What were they?"

"Special reporters for the New York press. I am no more a Yankee than yourself, although I have caught something of their infernal lingo."

"Well, tell me something of what you saw in the service."

"If I were to tell you all, I should speak 150

numbers of the *New York Times*, all of which I made. The truth is, although I was sent to report by the newspapers, I was sent by the nobs at Washington to look after M'Clellan." And he gave me a look of mystery and importance, which, enhanced by Briggs's beer, had a very effective and dramatic air about it.

"They made him safe, they did; winning would not suit their book; he was not to win, and he did not win, nor ever had a chance.

"Little Napoleon, as they called Mac, was a clever, plucky fellow, and if he had been left to deal with those in front, blessed if I don't think he would have licked them. But the rascally coons behind him were more than he could manage, and some of us were sent to make him safe.

"It was just after the great strategic movement, when M'Clellan drew together his crumpled-up army from before Lee and Beauregard, after six days' fighting, that I joined the camp beyond the swamps on the banks of the James. Finely planned it was by the Secesh, that attack. They knew that our man was not to win, and that General Pope here and General Hooker there were to snap their fingers at his orders. So Beauregard slipped neatly away from Corinth, and he and Lee came down on little Mac like a flash. M'Clellan fought like a tiger cat, but it was

three to two, and he was nearly swallowed with the hair on. If the Southerners had known what our men knew, we should never have heard of Gettysburg.

"We joined at City Point, and found the army some miles up the river. They were a precious lot. There was not a blackguard over sixteen in all Europe who was not there. I ain't no wise tightlaced, sir, but I give you my word, I don't believe that when Satan went to war he commanded half such a set of scoundrels. The general did all one man could do. He was always among them, toiling and bullying and coaxing, but they were a hopeless team—devils to fight, but the camp was no better than a kettle of fiends.

"One day, I and my men saw something was astir. A broiling, steaming, blasting day it was, the vapours rising from the marshes in clouds, and sucking the very marrow from the bones. M'Clellan and his staff rode out some four or five miles to reconnoitre, and took me with him, as he was fond of me, little thinking what I was after. The general took out his glass, and, after sweeping it round once or twice, says he to me :—

"'Will you take a message back to camp for me?'

"'I am your man,' says I, and the general pulled out his note-book, tore out a leaf, addressed it to

General Burnside, in a gummed envelope, and gave it to me.

"I set spurs to my horse, for I can ride a bit—spent three months in the Pampas—and went off, full tilt, along the corduroy road, until I had put a stretch of thicket between me and the general. Then I said to myself, we shall have a look at the message.

"The gummed envelope was no difficulty to a practised hand like me. I opened it and read as follows:—

" 'The waters are rising, and we have them. Let the whole force advance. The reserve by the river.'

" 'Not if I know it,' I said to myself. I went quietly to within a mile of camp, and then dashed through it as if Beelzebub were on my crupper, and never drew rein until I reached City Point. There I took steamer for Washington, and delivered the general's despatch in—the proper quarter."

"What a confounded scoundrel you must be!"

"I reckon so; but it was diamond cut diamond in those days. I had authority in black and white for all I did. You know how it turned out. Never a soul of the army came; the waters went down in two days; Lee, who had been very uneasy, knew the chance was over, and my masters rejoiced over M'Clellan. But they nearly played away their own

necks. I could show you, sir, what would make Broadway stare."

With that he took out a well-worn pocket-book, and, turning over some dirty letters, selected one which he was about to put into my hand, when he seemed to think better of it, and shut it up again. I saw the address of the letter; and a very yellow, greasy-looking epistle it was. It had a strange fascination for me, as connected with that bloody, terrible, and romantic war. He repossessed himself of it with some abruptness, and, as if thinking he had been indiscreet, exclaimed, "Now you have my shave, and you may believe as much or as little of it as you like."

"To tell you the truth," said I, "I do not believe much of it. May I ask the name of the hero of it?"

"That hero has had so many names, both before and since, that I really forget which he had then; and so, Mr Pemberton, your cross-examination has proved a failure."

I laughed and told him he had the advantage of me, which he owed no doubt to the cordiality of Briggs; but the fellow puzzled me. As he warmed with his story, his vulgar phraseology and provincial accent had disappeared, and he was plainly a man of education.

"Devilish good ale old Briggs brews," he said, as if seeing the impression he had made ; "but it sings in my head like a beetle at dusk. I wish you good morning, sir, and thank you for your civility to a wandering coon like me."

"Before we part," said I, "will you tell me the name of the gentleman you and I travelled with the other day."

He started, and an expression came over him of something more than surprise. "You and I, sir? Bless you, I never saw your face before."

"Not on Monday last?"

"Never, sleeping or waking, as far as I know.

"At least, you came down on Monday with an elderly gentleman. Who was he?"

"If I am not too bold, sir, Briggs should not brew so powerful. I wish you good morning."

He turned down the road and departed, and I sauntered homewards to the Grange.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DASHWOODS.

WHAT corner of the brain is it, I wonder, in which a thing lodges, which you know, and yet cannot remember? As I wandered along, I puzzled over the name I had seen on the back of the letter. I knew it, for my inner consciousness told me so; but, like some important despatch which Mary the housemaid, in the interest of tidiness, has stuffed into a china jar, it was nowhere to be found.

What was it? Trotter? No; not Trotter, certainly. Forrest? Not unlike it, said the keeper of the pigeon-hole, but still not Forrest. Try again. Strong? It was one syllable, but not Strong. Finch? Like it again, though Finch is as unlike Forrest as it can be. I could get no nearer, and gave up the chase: but I was certain that I knew it, for all that.

At half-past six, Topham the groom, a spider dog-cart, and a long-stepping gray were at the door to convey me to the Dashwoods. Novelists are fond of describing the sensations of young ladies on the

eve of a party. I know little of the sensations of young ladies; their confidences to me have been few, and such as they have been, I have found far from trustworthy. But although I had then reached the ripe age of twenty-six, I was in all social respects a young man, who had seen very little of any society but my own rather narrow professional set, and felt, I am not ashamed to confess, a kind of quiver at plunging unsupported into a strange baronet's house. A shy man I do not call myself. In my own circle I am thought a cool hand, and few take liberties with me. But my reputation has not been gained without an effort; and little my comrades think how my heart will beat with excitement—how that *anima vagula blandula* will jump, and throb, and tremble—only because two or three pairs of eyes, the windows of intellects not at all profound, are looking at me.

So now, sitting behind the long-stepping gray, was I filled with thick-coming fancies. I wished my visit were over. "But," said Reason, "at twelve o'clock it will be over." I wished I had not accepted. "But," said Reason, "if you had declined, you would have fretted to death because you had not accepted." What will they think of me? was, I fear, the prevalent colour of my thoughts. Not of my looks, for they are unobtrusive. I am not a walking Maypole like Dagentree, and there is nothing about me which

would lead any one to turn round to look at me. Not of my manners either, for I acquired them in my father's house. "What then," said Reason, "sets you a quaking in this way?" I could not tell, but quake I did down to the soles of my dress boots.

My drive of five miles was charming, through such scenes as Morland loved to paint. The wind wafted pleasant odours from hay-field and bean-field; and meadow flowers and roadside bluebells gave colour to the scene. The foliage, still in the fresh glory of a late summer, was in full splendour, and to me, to whom sunshine, and air, and green grass were in themselves treasures, mainly, I suppose, because I never expected to enjoy them, the landscape proved the best sedative of the insane perturbation of my spirit.

The lodge at last, covered with honeysuckle—an old stone gateway, with two eagles, with ferocious plumage, perched on either buttress. The park was studded with grand stately elms. The middle-aged woman who opened the gate looked at us with kindly eyes, and dropped a curtsy. She was tidy and pleasant to look at; and the expression of a lodge-keeper's face is not the worst index to the *ménage* at the hall.

A sweep of the approach brought us in sight of the Grecian portico, which had been the subject of

Dagentree's sneers. It was ugly, I own, and darkened the middle windows ; but the general effect was light and handsome ; and the timber, though luxuriant and fine, did not crowd round and shut in the building, as is too often the case with English country-seats.

A spacious entrance-hall certainly betrayed at once the Hellenic taste of the designer. Statues and busts, mutilated or perfect, were ranged round the vestibule, and in the centre was a fine copy in marble of Danneker's Ariadne.

I was ushered into the drawing-room, through a couple of rooms on the ground floor, and plucking up my courage as I approached the enemy, resolved to face the worst.

There was, however, nothing to face which would have frightened a chicken. Sir George Dashwood, a rubicund, short-statured, good-tempered looking country gentleman, came forward with a simple hearty greeting, and presented me to Lady Dashwood and his daughters, saying that he had known my father in the Guards, and that he was very glad to see his son in his house. Lady Dashwood was a matronly, good-looking dame, and two pretty girls completed the party assembled in the drawing-room. But the guests began to arrive ; and were for the most part of the staple announced by Dagentree.

Mr and Mrs Torrens, Colonel Hastings and Miss Hastings, Sir George Brook, Captain Deverall, Mr Nugent, Mrs Carrington.

At this last name I lifted up my eyes, for here in truth was the widow, not unlike what I had expected, but very unlike Dagentree's ideal.

She was dark, rather below the middle size, plump, though not stout, in figure; clear in complexion, with great soft liquid eyes inclining to brown, a firmly-cut chin, withal, and a mouth not devoid of resolution and character, although sweet in expression; she could not be above thirty, and probably was some years short of it.

"Are we all here?" said Sir George to his daughter.

"Yes, papa; all but Mr Rendelson."

"Ah! Rendelson. He shall have five minutes' grace, as he is a busy man. A very able man, Mr Pemberton, and belongs to your profession too. I do not know how half the county could get on without him. I am sure you will suit each other."

As he spoke, the door opened, and in walked the subject of Sir George's eulogy. The surprises of the day were not over, for here, in person, was my elderly fellow-traveller.

I knew him, as I had done in the case of the other, at once; but in both instances there was an indescrib-

able difference from the appearance they presented in the railway carriage; not sufficient to make me doubt for a moment of their identity, but still bewildering and unpleasant.

His manner and the tone of his voice I at once recognised, and his features were too characteristic to be forgotten; although in evening dress, his toilet presented no peculiarity. Sir George introduced me, and he accepted the introduction graciously, without the slightest indication that we had ever met before.

Dinner was announced immediately afterwards, and, although considerably struck by the incident, I had no opportunity at that time of observing Mr Rendelson more closely.

We defiled, two and two, into the dining-room, the widow falling to my lot, as I had half hoped and half feared might be the case.

I was murmuring the ordinary commonplaces—the prelude or overture to dinner discourse, when she said—

“You are living with Mr Dagentree, I hear. I am told he has a beautiful place.”

“Do you know him?” said I.

“Oh no! I know very few people as yet. I have only come into the county lately. I have looked for him in the Dagentree pew at church; but I suppose he never goes to church. When I say I don’t know

him, I mean, I think not ; for there is something not unfamiliar to me in his name, although I cannot recollect where I can have heard it before."

"It is a charming place, and he is a very good fellow," said I. "I wish both he and his place were better known in the neighbourhood. Originality and grace are not such common merits that one can easily allow them to be buried. He is a most hospitable and kindly anchorite."

"Why does he bury himself, as I hear he does? Has the world been unkind to him, or what misfortune does he brood over?"

"The only misfortunes I know to have befallen him are two—the possession of too much money, and the absence of anything to do. He is very ill of these diseases, and takes them much to heart. I wish I knew a cure for them."

"He should go into parliament, and cure one of them, if not both."

"So I hope he may ; but at present he looks with supreme contempt on politics and parliamentary stars. He sees no difference whatever between Lord Palmerston and Lord Derby, and does not think that it is of the least consequence which is in power."

"At all events, I hope he will alter his establishment, and put a lady at the head of it," said my fair neighbour, with true feminine solicitude.

We fell to talking the commonplaces of weather and scenery, and all those atmospheric themes with which the vacant or agitated mind seems in this humid climate to be constantly engrossed. I found my companion on the whole lively, though occasionally she would relapse into reverie. She had a vein of sadness running through the texture of a mind naturally gay and joyous, which was curiously interwoven in her temperament. She seemed to have lived a great deal abroad. Whether she had ever been in America she did not say, nor did I ask her; but she made no allusion to that country. She rather avoided speaking of herself, and preferred more general subjects, such as literature and music. On these her opinions seemed to be founded both in study and good taste.

So we discussed Mozart and Beethoven, and preferred them far before Verdi and Meyerbeer; allowed Rossini and Donizetti a place on the steps of the altar, and went deep into the metaphysics of that wondrous power in the concord of sweet sounds to make sensation too intense or too refined for our feeling sense, and which are unsatisfying even in their enjoyment from a yearning consciousness of incompleteness.

"I presume," I said, "you are yourself a musician."

"I used to be," she said, with a sigh, "but I live

on the memory of music now. The limits between pain and pleasure are slight at any time, and music always pains me ; but I love the memory of music past. Can you tell me who any of the party are ?”

“No, indeed, I am a total stranger to them all. I was going to have asked you to do me the same favour.”

“I only know one or two of them. Colonel Hastings and Sir George Brook I have met before. The colonel is an officer who, though young, has seen much service. He distinguished himself in the Crimea and India, and is a very intelligent and agreeable companion. He is tenant of the white house among the trees, which you passed on the way from the Grange. Sir George Brook has succeeded lately to his baronetcy, and is living with Colonel Hastings at present. He has, I believe, a good estate in the north.

“And who is our *vis-à-vis* ?” said I, looking at Mr Rendelson, for I had observed her acknowledge him in the drawing-room, and his face had been a subject of furtive study to me during dinner.

“That is Mr Rendelson, the lawyer,” she said, with a slight confusion in her manner, “I thought every one knew him.”

“I have a curiosity to know more about him. Can you at all enlighten me ?”

"I know very little of him, except that he was very kind and useful to me at the time that I first came to Bonthron. But he is a peculiar man, and I don't think we are as good friends as we used to be. He is an attorney at —— and has large practice, and is, I believe, very well off."

"I met him not long ago, but I do not think he recognises me."

"He is a very difficult man to read; but, I suppose, all lawyers are," she said, laughingly.

"It is our stock-in-trade—our costume in which we play," I said; "but behind the scenes, for the most part, we are an innocent and simple-minded company."

"I suppose you meet with very strange characters in your profession, Mr Pemberton?"

"I suppose I shall," said I; "but I have seldom met any one more strange than I did this morning in the unsophisticated grounds of Dagentree." And I told her the photographic adventures of the day.

"Oh! I wish he could come up to Bonthron. I should so much like to have a photograph of the place. It is very pretty, Mr Pemberton, and if you can escape from your cell, I hope you will come and look at it, and bring the hermit with you."

"I should be delighted; but I am a bond-slave to the hermit at present. As to the photographer, I believe Mr Rendelson knows more about him than I do."

"Mr Rendelson! Oh no; I assure you, that is quite out of his line. Why do you imagine anything so improbable?"

"I may be mistaken," I replied. And as the telegraph from Lady Dashwood had begun to vibrate, the covey rose with a flutter, and the ladies rustled to the drawing-room.

We gathered together, as is the fashion of male birds, pushed up the bottles, and prepared to be happy after the manner of our ancestors; and in that remote country-side, claret after dinner was not as yet proscribed. Sitting next my host, I ventured to ask a question or two about my fair and pleasant neighbour; but he did not add much to my information. Her father was a younger son of a distant branch of the family, and had died several years before. She had married abroad, Sir George believed; but in conformity with the settlement of the estate, she had, since she succeeded, dropped her husband's name. It was supposed the marriage was unhappy. "Was there not some question about her succession, Rendelson?" said Sir George.

"There was no question about her right, Sir George; but there was some difficulty in discovering her. She and her husband were abroad; her father was dead; and she had no near relations."

"Well, we should be obliged to you for providing

us with so pleasant and good-looking a neighbour. We have been delighted with her, but she seldom goes out, and it required a good deal of feminine diplomacy to induce her to come to-day. I am glad she did, for she seemed more cheerful than usual."

"Has she been long a widow?" I inquired of Rendelson.

"I cannot tell; but perhaps it might be better for me not to gossip about a client's affairs."

I was rebuked, and disliked the cold, hard face more than ever.

The conversation became general; and the lawyer, hard and stony as he looked, took his part in it well. He was well-read, and bore himself like a man of the world, with hardly a dash of professional priggishness. Colonel Hastings was a cultivated man, who had been to all ends of the earth, was a good classic, and excelled in more than one of the arts. Collecting beetles, however, I found afterwards, was the main pride and enjoyment of his life. He kept off his hobby, however, on this occasion, and talked of the Crimea and India, and abroad generally, with a quiet, gentlemanlike authority. Among other anecdotes he told us the following, which was suggested by what we had been speaking of about Mrs Carrington's history.

CHAPTER XV.

LE REVENANT.

I WAS stationed at Agra during the Cabul disaster in 1841—one of a mere handful of British troops, left in charge of the wives, sisters, and daughters of the actors in that most unhappy expedition. And a weary, heart-breaking time it was. The Lieutenant-Governor, who had prayed and besought the Calcutta authorities not to risk the adventure, had the worst forebodings for its fate; and although he did all an able, kindly, and well-mannered man could do to maintain the spirits of the circle, those who knew him could read too well what his fears were. Words could not describe—indeed it is painful for me even now to recall—the dreary wretchedness of that fatal month, during which no tidings came of the devoted army. Evening after evening saw the roads crowded by anxious women, sitting there for hours that they might hear the first news of those who were dear to them, and evening after evening saw them return in despair. And when, at last, the news came

that the sole survivor had staggered, half-alive, back to his countrymen, with the tidings of the great disaster, the wail which ascended from those heart-broken creatures I shall never, while I live, forget.

There had been a captain in one of the native regiments, an old acquaintance of mine, of the name of Donnelly, Jerry Donnelly, as he was called by every one. He was careful to explain to all his friends that his name was Jerome, and not Jeremiah; although why he so unduly preferred the saint to the prophet, I never understood. Jerry Donnelly, however, he was, and as strange and eccentric a creature as ever breathed.

He was a very good-looking fellow, and a first-rate officer, but a careless, rollicking, half-insane mad-cap of a man, with an amazing flow of spirits, little education or culture, a great, almost miraculous talent for languages, with a soft heart, and an easy temper. It was impossible to make him angry; and in all circumstances, however unpleasant, he maintained a placid serenity, which seem to imply that he was on intimate terms with Fortune, and knew the very worst which she could do.

Among the other tricks which the fickle goddess had played him was, that she had married him. Why he ever married as he did, no one

could imagine. The lady was neither handsome, clever, nor rich. She was simply passable as to looks, with the liveliness of good health and youth, a quality not unapt to develop itself in vivacity of temper, when those other attributes disappear. But, on some impulse, Jerry Donnelly had asked her the momentous question, and had been favourably answered.

A most uncomfortable couple they were. Jerry, from the very first, neglected her, not intentionally, I believe, but simply because, for the moment, he forgot her existence. It never seemed to him necessary to alter his former bachelor round in any respect ; and as the lady had no notion of being neglected, she resented his indifference, and chalked out a line for herself. They never quarrelled outwardly, but were hardly ever together.

So stood the domestic circle, if such it could be called, of Captain Donnelly, when he was ordered on General Elphinstone's expedition. His wife would fain have remained at Calcutta ; but as all the wives were going to Agra, she, for very shame, was obliged to go there also. On the first rumours of disaster, she was very indifferent, and said she was sure Jerry would turn up at the most inconvenient time. When, however, the tidings became confirmed, and it was certain that Jerry had perished with his comrades,

a great change came over her. She shut herself up for months—saw no one, and went nowhere. And when at the end of nearly a year she began once more to look at the world, she was grave, thoughtful, and softened. She went up to Calcutta after that, and I never saw her again until I came home on furlough in 1847. She was then living at a pretty place in Somersetshire, and was known as Mrs Courtnay of Branley Hall.

I met her accidentally, but she was very glad to see me, and explained to me, what I had not heard, that when she arrived at Calcutta she found that poor Jerry had, four months before he left Agra, succeeded to this place of Branley Hall by the death of a distant relation. He had previously made a will, leaving her all his worldly goods—then slender enough ; so that in the end this fine estate had come to her, and a new name with it. She asked me to come down and see her, which I did, and learned more of her history.

Sorrow and prosperity had greatly changed her for the better. Even her looks had improved ; and she was a pleasant, agreeable woman. She had remained four years in Calcutta before she returned, but had at once assumed the name of Courtnay, which was a condition on which the bequest was made.

"You know, Colonel Hastings, I could not have lost the estate, for what would poor Jerry have said, when he came back?"

I thought the woman's head must have been affected by her misfortunes, and said nothing.

"I see you think me deranged; but I knew he was alive all the time."

"Why, what could have led you to think so?"

"I *saw* him, Colonel Hastings. It was in our old bungalow at Calcutta, about two years after I had gone back. Late in the evening I heard a step outside which strangely affected me. I was lying, half-asleep, and, starting up in a drowsy state, I heard a voice at the verandah, and, as I thought, inquiring of my stupid old native whether I lived there. The steps then turned away. I darted to the casement; and although the figure was clad in the most extraordinary compound of European and Asiatic garments, I am sure it was Jerry. I darted down-stairs and rushed out, but the man had disappeared. The servant said he was a bad fakir, and wished to get into the bungalow, but could or would tell me nothing of what he had said. But I am quite sure it was Jerry. So I am certain he will come back. But you remember he never was punctual," she added, with a faint smile.

I did not say to her, that if Jerry was alive she

must have heard of him in some other way ; but I took leave of her, and shortly afterwards returned to India.

In 1853, I was appointed to an embassy to Nepal, a very striking country, inhabited by a powerful, war-like race. The first minister, or vizier, of the country met us, as is the Nepaulese fashion, outside the capital, and we had a very courteous and gratifying reception. He was a tall, handsome man, with a flowing black beard, and conversed with me in Persian, which I spoke fluently. After our interview, one of the attendants informed me that the vizier wished to see me alone, and he accordingly conducted me to an inner apartment. He ordered the attendants to withdraw, and then, in tones only too familiar, he exclaimed—

“ Well, Hastings, my boy, how go the Plungers ? ”

It was Jerry Donnelly, by all that was miraculous. I had observed him staring earnestly at me during the interview, and something in his gestures seemed not unfamiliar to me, but his flowing beard, solemn air, and Oriental dress so much disguised him, that even when I heard the well-remembered voice, I could scarcely realise his identity.

“ But what on earth are you doing here, Jerry ? ” said I, “ and why don’t you go home to your wife, like a Christian ? ”

"My wife ! well, that's the whole affair. You see, she's somebody else's wife ; so I'm better out of the way ; it would be a pity that poor Sophy should commit bigamy."

"I assure you, you are entirely mistaken ; Mrs Donnelly has not married again."

"Hasn't she, though ?" said he. "Don't I know better ? Didn't I go to my own bungalow and find out she had married that starched fool Courtnay, when she knew I never could endure him ?"

To his intense astonishment, I told him how the truth was, and in return, he related to me his own adventures. He had been carried into Tartary, and there detained for three years, when he was allowed to accompany a caravan or body of pilgrims to Nepaul. Being by that time a proficient in the language, he was taken notice of at court, but very strictly watched. He effected his escape, however, disguised as a fakir, and made his way to Calcutta, but finding, as he thought, his wife married again to a man in his old regiment, he returned, was taken into favour, and had risen to his present distinction.

"Well, I always was a blundering fool, but I went home with a heart so soft to Sophy, and vowing that I never would vex her any more with my vagaries, that when I heard her called Mrs Courtnay I was

turned to stone, and did not care a rap what became of me, not even to be made a vizier ; which, I assure you, Charlie, is no joke in its way."

"Well, at all events, you must come home now and enjoy your good fortune."

"I am not sure about that," said he. "Recollect, she has grown accustomed to be mistress—I have grown accustomed to be vizier ; she won't like to be contradicted, and it's a thing I never could bear, and what I never allow on any account. Now, if I went home, she would not be mistress, and, as sure as fate, she would contradict me. Maybe it's better as it is."

Next morning he sent for me again.

"I have been thinking," he said, "of all that strange story you told me. I am all changed since we parted. I hardly know myself to be the same man I used to be, and I am not sure if I should treat Sophy well. But ask her to come out here, and then she may try. If she likes me in this outlandish place, I will go home with her ; if we quarrel here, no one will be a bit the wiser, and I can continue to be dead."

"But," said I, "have you no encumbrances ? Perhaps she might object to the details of your establishment."

"Not a bit," said Jerry ; "I have none of your

Eastern prejudices ; let her come, and she will find nobody to disturb her."

So she did come, and after living in Nepaul for two years, brought Jerry back in triumph to Branley Hall. And such is the true version of a tale which made some noise in the newspapers a few years ago.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JOCKEY.

THIS anecdote was pleasantly told, and well received. The conversation then became general, and we talked the usual round of weather, crops, and politics, and at last the subject of horse-racing and the Derby was brought up.

"Pity the whole concern is so blackguard," said the colonel. "From the racing peer to the betting peasant, they are all scamps."

"They are so, I believe," said Mr Rendelson; "and yet I once had professionally to investigate a case which disclosed some singular traits among them of a different cast. The story is perfectly true, although so strange as hardly to seem credible.

"Very early in my professional life, and therefore a great many years ago, I was consulted by a gentleman of large fortune, well known on the turf, under the following singular circumstances. It seemed that my informant in the course of that year had a race-horse which was first favourite for one of the great

racers, and that this horse had broken down most suspiciously while almost in the act of winning the race. The owner—I may call him Mr Stanton, although that was not his real name—was exceedingly annoyed and disgusted, and particularly displeased with his trainer and jockey, by whom the animal was ridden. He resolved to dismiss the jockey, break up his stables, and give up the turf altogether.

“The jockey, whose name was Tom White, had previously stood very well in the racing world, as a keen and honest lad. He had been distressed beyond measure at his failure, and had shed bitter tears in the moment of defeat. He assured Mr Stanton that the accident must have been owing to foul play—that the horse had been got at somehow—and that without greater precautions than had been used, no gentleman need attempt to train.

“Mr Stanton believed that this was substantially true, but was firmly convinced that Mr Tom White was not unacquainted with the source of the calamity. He therefore remained firm to his resolution of selling his stud, and dismissing White; which last he did. Tom got an engagement in the North, and left that district of country altogether.

“Tom made but little remonstrance against his dismissal. What he most seemed to feel was leaving

the yearling colts, in which he had taken much pride, and in particular one of which he had great expectations, and had called, on his own account, the 'Red Rover.' He was rather a bony, shapeless animal, and judges thought little of him; but Tom, who revered no one's opinion but his own, was always loud in his praises to his master. His last words, as he was leaving were, 'Don't 'ee sell the couts, squoire—don't 'ee sell "Red Rover"—he be a rare 'un, he be;' and with this friendly caution Tom White went on his way, and was seen no more.

"In the spring following, Mr Stanton advertised his stud for sale. Two days before the time appointed, the stud-groom presented himself to Mr Stanton, while at breakfast, with a face of ashy paleness and trembling limbs.

"'Please sir, "Red Rover" be stole,' was all his faltering tongue could express.

"'"Red Rover" stolen! That is impossible, my lad. He was locked up in the stable last night—I saw it done myself.'

"'They be off wi' him this morning, anyhow,' said the lad. 'His stall was empty when we went at seven o'clock, and we can't see him nowhere.'

"Although Mr Stanton had not the same exalted opinion of 'Red Rover's' capacity that Tom White had, he thought him a promising colt, but so utterly

unformed as hardly to have tempted a 'professional' to such an act. But the audacity of the theft made him very indignant, and determined him to find out the perpetrator.

"The examination of the premises threw no light on the mystery, excepting that it became certain that, however accomplished, the theft had not been committed by violence. Nothing was broken—nothing out of order. The locks were entire, and the head man in the stables corroborated the lad in attesting that the doors were found locked in the morning.

"Such was the tale with which Mr Stanton resorted to my advice. No clue whatever could be found to the perpetrator, unless the ordinary and simple one, that the stable servants had connived at the theft. But Mr Stanton owned that there had been nothing in their manner to warrant this suspicion, although he was entirely at a loss to account for the outrage on any other supposition.

"I did all I could under the circumstances. I advertised far and wide; I warned the great railway lines, and employed the most eminent detective whom Scotland Yard could furnish. But not the slightest trace could be discovered, excepting that a man had been stopped at Hexham with a colt of which he could give no satisfactory account; but, as it was a

gray, and 'Red Rover' was a reddish-brown, the magistrate not only would not detain the man, but reprimanded the police for apprehending him when they had the description of the stolen horse in their hands.

"Nothing had been heard of Tom White since his departure, nor did any one know whither he had gone. It did cross Mr Stanton's mind that if Tom White had been in the district, he was not unlikely to have been of use in the inquiry; but no one had seen or heard of him, and Mr Stanton was obliged to content himself with a second dismissal of his servants. The detective was always under the impression that the man at Hexham was truly the thief, and made no secret of his opinion that the magistrate who liberated him was a donkey; but he was a taciturn potentate by nature, and never condescended to explain a clue which he had nevertheless followed up until it broke.

"Two years afterwards there was some curiosity excited at one of the great races of the year about a horse which was so completely 'dark' as to be almost out of the betting altogether. The name of the owner under which he ran was a turf-name assumed for the occasion; but he was understood to be the property of, or at least to be vouched for, by a well-known half-squire half-trainer. But what he was, or

where he was, no one knew. The 'touts' were utterly at fault. They could not discover the place at which he was training; and as no efforts they had made had led to any result, unfriended as the animal was by backers, there was considerable expectation created on his appearance.

"The horse could not be heard of the night before. 'Deserter' had not reported himself. But when the ground was cleared for the preliminary canter, he appeared; and great was the rush to the front to see him. The first glimpse of him showed he was formidable; the long-swinging, well-extended stride with which he took his canter, impressed all the knowing ones. He was large and sinewy, powerful as well as handsome, but his colour was mottled, such as is rarely found in thorough-breds. Mr Stanton was there, and to his surprise saw his old friend, Tom White, mounted on the cynosure of the day.

"The race was never in doubt. The stranger, hard held, remained behind the front horses until three hundred yards from the post, and then, let out, ran home by himself, amid the shouts and acclamations of the multitude.

"The race over, 'Deserter' vanished as mysteriously as he came, and in spite of Mr Stanton's inquiries, no tidings of Tom White could be discovered.

"A week afterwards, a groom arrived at Mr Stanton's, leading a reddish-brown thoroughbred of great power, and delivered to Mr Stanton a note to the following effect :—

"'Mr Stanton—Sir, I send you back the "Red Rover" as I borrowed two years ago. I knew he could do it, if I got him away from the nobblers. So I borrowed him, and I beg your pardon if it was wrong. I have paid into your bank for you £1,500, which was the stakes, and I hope you will overlook the time when "Revenge" was nobbled.—Your most obedient servant,

T. WHITE.

"'I am off to Australia, and have made a pretty penny by the "Deserter," which was "Red Rover."'

"However irregular Tom White's way of doing business was, of course, after such a result, Mr Stanton could hardly find fault with it. He sent me the note, and begged of me to find Tom White and learn some more particulars; and with some difficulty I found him at Liverpool about to sail for Australia. When I assured him I had no hostile intentions, but quite the contrary, he gave me a full account of his proceedings. I translate Tom's Doric into vernacular.

"'You see, sir,' said Tom, "'Revenge," he was

nobbled. Not that I knows who did it, but I knows no other scoundrel but one who could have done it. I punched his head handsome for it, however, soon after. But I durst not have split, and had to go; and serve me right. Only it broke my heart to lose the race, and leave "Red Rover."

" 'There's a many people,' said Tom, ' that thinks they're judges of a horse. There's swells think it, and snobs, and knowing coves of the ring. Lord bless you, sir, they knows nothing. They goes, and they looks, and feels, and tries a walk and a gallop, and looks wise, and thinks they are fly to everything. If you want to learn about a horse, you must see him all day and every day. They are like the women, sir. Unless you see them in all weathers, you will never know anything about them; and even then it is not much to trust to. I knowed "Red Rover." He was a rough 'un to look at, and no one but myself had a thought of what he could do. But I knew that for his age he was a flyer and a stayer, such as I never mounted afore.

" 'Well, I hears that "Red Rover" was to be sold. I was mortal sorry, for I thought to myself that he would help the squire to win back the money he lost on "Revenge." But selling was a thing I could not suffer. So I resolved to steal him—for the squire.

“‘This was the way on it. When I was a bit of a boy, I used to travel with Ducrow, and learned a secret or two in horse-painting worth knowing. None of your stupid dyes, that you may see when the sun shines, making the coat hard and starry, like a plastered gable. This is a thing that won’t wash off. Nothing takes it off but a preparation which is part of the secret. So I steals “Red Rover”—walked him off easy at two in the morning, for I had a key of my own—rode him forty miles across the country to a quiet place I knew of, and painted him a splendid gray. It was really, sir, a pretty thing to look at. We then set out together for Scotland; and barring that sharp-nosed bobby at Hexham, who must have been up to the dodge himself, no one challenged me. It would have done your heart good to have heard the jolly beak pitching into the bobby that a gray horse could not be a chestnut.

“‘I was then serving a master who was training another horse on the sly across the border. I put him up to my plan; and he went shares, as a gentleman should. And now you have my tale.’

“The matter was kept very close at the time. Mr Stanton made some inquiry to ascertain whether ‘Deserter’s’ rather eccentric proceedings were in conformity with the rules of the Jockey Club; but

he found everything square in that respect, and thought it unnecessary to take any further steps."

"Thank you, Rendelson. Strange, if true, as they say. No offence, man," said our host, as Rendelson's face darkened; "we don't doubt you—it is only too good to be true. Shall we join the ladies?"

So we broke up, and returned to the drawing-room. I had no further conversation with the widow, for Mr Rendelson entirely monopolised her, much, as I thought, to her chagrin. As I had a drive before me, I left early, amid many kind expressions of hope of a speedy return, and a very warm request on the part of Mrs Carrington that Dagentree and I would come up and visit her in the course of the week. Rendelson shook hands with me, with a cordiality which I thought more than the occasion called for, and with an eye which rather belied his smile.

CHAPTER XVII.

POLITICS.

I FOUND Dagentree sitting up for me, and accepted his cordial invitation to smoke a cigar on the verandah before retiring. He seemed singularly buoyant; and after I had recounted the adventures of the evening, I inquired after his proceedings.

"I prospered very well," he said, "and played abominably; but we defeated the curate notwithstanding."

"*We!*" I rejoined. "Who were *we*?"

"Miss Sophia Wendover and I played together," he explained, with the slightest tinge of consciousness in his manner. "She is a very good player. I had a first-rate couple of hours on the river before you went," he added, palpably changing the subject.

"It seems to have been a very good day for angling," I suggested, maliciously; but he would not rise to my fly; and without further dwelling on the events of the day, we fell into more general talk.

"I wonder, Dagentree," I said, "that you should have so little humanity about you. Sybaritic as all around you is, do you think that the 'unfeathered two-legged thing' which you are ever was intended, in the fitness of things, to vegetate in this bower of roses until you die in aromatic pain? If love stir you not, why should you be dead to ambition?"

"What do you mean by ambition, my good benighted soul?"

"The last infirmity"——

"Oh, of course; the thing is as stale as the quotation. If I let 'the tangles of Neæra's hair' alone, I must 'scorn delights,' I suppose. But you know the end, 'Comes the fell Fury.' I had rather wait her ladyship here."

"And if all the world were to do as you do, what would become of us?"

"If they all had £20,000 a year, and did as I do, they would be uncommonly well off."

Pemberton. "Possibly; but how long do you think your £20,000 a year would remain to you, if this great social machine, which we call government, were never worked excepting by ignoble or mercenary hands?"

Dagentree. "Every one to his part. The machine to my mind would run much more smoothly, and do its work much better, were there fewer hands engaged in its operations. Politics I hate."

Pemberton. "Wherefore, thou cynic of the woods?"

Dagentree. "It is a base part. I grant you, like many other things, it has its own attractions at a distance. To 'wield at will a fierce democracy,' to labour for a country's good, and all the commonplaces of patriotism, are grand-sounding sentiments, and make the boyish pulse beat high with very laudable emotions. But the reality! It is like the pictures outside the menagerie compared with the sawdust, the gas, the evil odours, the hideous cries, and squalid wretchedness of the immured animals within. Political life is concentrated selfishness."

Pemberton. "I do not agree with you. The field of exertion is a noble one—the ends, when rightly estimated, the purest and most elevating of which the intellect is capable. The gold, of course, is not without alloy—no human merit is; but allowing a large discount for those who engage in public affairs from meaner motives, it is a magnificent feature of our country that her richest and noblest feel that it adds to their wealth and their nobility to be permitted to give their free services to the nation."

Dagentree. "Still the outside picture. But pay your money—and here the simile continues good—pay your money, and go inside. I do not say, with Walpole, that they all have their price in money value. He said, by the way, 'All *these* men have their price,' and

I doubt not he was right ; but how many of the august 658 enter that cage purely from love of their country ; or, how many, being there, coming with the ardour of youthful enthusiasm, or the matured philanthropy of middle age, can retain their self-respect for a session ? The bloom is rudely rubbed off by the 'whips' in the two first divisions."

Pemberton. "Of course, representative government must be party government, otherwise there would be but little security for political morality."

Dagentree. "Even so ; but why require security for political morality, if the motives of the politicians were pure ? Is it not simply because there are base ends to gain, and base motives which urge, that these must be held in by bit, bridle, and whip ? You concede that if the individual be left to his own promptings, he would go astray ; and you only restrain him by a compulsory merging of all individual opinion in a blind adherence to party leadership."

Pemberton. "I grieve to hear you speak as one of the profane. Co-operation and concert are the talisman of success in all human affairs. May a soldier not fight his country's battles with courage and patriotism, because he sinks his individual opinion in the leader he follows ?"

Dagentree. "Not a felicitous illustration, O feeble, but too honest lawyer. I should take thee at thy word.

Men enter the House of Commons much as the recruit enters the army. A bit of blue ribbon, the sound of a drum, a shilling, and a pot of beer are the component parts of the patriotism of the British Grenadiers. Once in, he follows because he would be shot if he did not. Of course, when orators and poets recount our martial deeds, they sink the beer and the shilling, as you do. Nevertheless, not one of twenty of the coins rings true, or would bear rubbing."

Pemberton. "Nay, but I hold to my illustration. Granted that your bumpkin is translated, in many cases, into a hero by omnipotent beer, shall we therefore say that the profession of arms is degrading? Of what avail your £20,000 a year, if any strong man may come and take it? You lounge away your days here, basking in the sunshine of your flowers, and the shade of your books, only because those with more energy than yourself have the spirit to defend you. Your member of Parliament aids to make those laws which the soldier protects, and on which you, sneering at both, rely for the privilege of doing nothing."

Dagentree.

" 'A legal broom's a moral chimney-sweeper,
And that's the reason he himself's so dirty.'"

Flies and carrion crows have their mission in life. I do believe we could not get on without them, and

that but for their labours my £20,000 a year would hardly suffice to make life endurable. They have their mission, and so has your talking, bribing, intriguing, not to say lying hero whom men call M.P. Shall I therefore deify Beelzebub and worship the god of flies?"

Pemberton. "What would England have been without her statesmen? What of inspiration, eloquence, enthusiasm is there which does not surround as a halo Parliamentary distinction? I had rather have been Charles Fox, with the cheers even of his antagonists following his glowing periods, than the greatest author who ever

' Scatter'd from his golden urn
Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.'

One has the joy, not only of fame, but of action. The other, a tame, dull sense of coming celebrity, always flickering for the present, and often never achieved until the unenjoyed future."

Dagentree. "Charles Fox—your trump card. Well, take him,—what is there in his career which a wise man would envy? Envy!—I might say would accept? A gambler, a spendthrift, distasteful to the country, detested by his sovereign—not too scrupulous in his political associations, but unhappy in them all—politics were his curse. At St Ann's—'so soon of care beguiled'—I had admired him. The easy flow of

cultivated thought, and the genial warmth of an unrivalled temper, might have made him happy and respected. But political life destroyed him—poisoned him while living, and blasted the memory of a great intellect.”

Pemberton. “So you ignorantly judge. But half the security we now enjoy may be traced to that great statesman’s sagacity. He lived in evil times; but the seed of popular principles which he flung broadcast on stony ground bore its fruit notwithstanding, and yielded an enormous harvest in the next generation. But if your heart is too cold to be touched by his grand, massive, English temperament—what of Pitt—what of Burke, the sublime?”

Dagentree. “A cold Englishman, and a mad Irishman: I reverence neither. Pitt never was anything but a marvellous schoolboy. Had he never been a politician, and had his abilities been allowed to mature, he would have been a great man, although he wanted the pliant versatility and fire of genius. He could speak, as the leader of the Oxford Union speaks. Measured sentences, formed on Cicero and Seneca, with all the fire of nature crushed out of them, were exactly the style of oratory which suited the Court party of those days. The puppet of a strong-willed, obstinate dynastic monarch, obliged to subdue the natural liberality of his opinions, and to squeeze

them into the royal mould, until he brought this country to the brink of revolution and ruin—he was not a man whose career was to be wished for. He was honest—so is my ploughman. He was moral—so I believe is Stubbs also ; but he lived an unhappy life, and died a premature and wretched death. As to Burke, I should gladly have had his genius. His powers of composition were gigantic. He was full of great conceptions, and as an author did great things, and might have done greater. But his temper was soured, and the equipoise of his mind upset, by political warfare, in which men unconsciously refer to their zeal for their country the excitement which arises from the stings of wounded vanity, and the hindrances in the way of their personal advancement.”

Pemberton. “Pitt, it is true, is less to my taste, mainly, I believe, because he was successful. He pleased the gods, but Fox, your humble servant—still, his was a grand career. Is your soul so dead as not to feel that you would gladly give up life at forty-seven for the glory of having ruled your country’s destinies for twenty-five years? It was a marvellous life ; and stern and cold as he seemed in public, the man’s heart in private was as warm, and his wit as playful as if he had done nothing but play at croquet at Wendover, or smoke cigars at Dagentree. Burke, I grant you, was magnificent and unhappy. But that was his temperament

—the fruit of his highly strung Celtic nerves. Politics evoked his power, but they were not answerable for his misfortunes.”

Dagentree. “Be it so. They tempt me not to try those treacherous and muddy waters. If I were to choose one of the number with whom to exchange, I should select Palmerston. He seems to know how to extract the sweets and discard the bitter of public life; and and if kings are happy, which I greatly doubt, none probably ever ruled more potently than he. It does one good to see him, as I did two seasons ago, trotting gaily in the Park, as fresh as a daisy, with English breeding and Irish humour marking his expression. But come, we grow prosy, and the night grows cold. Let politics alone. Much more important matters await us. The Wendovers are coming to dinner on Monday.”

“Indeed,” said I; “wherefore crawls Diogenes from his tub?”

“Fate would have it so. The spectacles said, ‘Ask us,’ and I asked them.”

“Does Sophia come?”

“One of the girls comes—I don’t know which.”

“But remember we are to go to Mrs Carrington to lunch. Let us wait until to-morrow before deciding. Good night.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUNDAY.

DAGENTREE. "Well, Pemberton, how fared you at church to-day? Was the widow there?"

Pemberton. "No, she was not. But all the Wendo-ver party were there, and were kind enough to take me back with them, and give me luncheon. I had a charming walk home through these wonderful lanes, and across meadows carpeted with flowers; and, ever and anon, I sat down under a huge elm by the hedge-row, and was happy in the shade, and the fresh delicious breeze."

Dagentree. "It is very good for a dingy lawyer to see something of the brighter side of nature. Did time stand still with you?"

Pemberton. "By no means. The sun 'galloped down the western sky' a great deal too fast; and I was sorry to turn homewards."

Dagentree. "How did you find our friend Bom-pas? Did he shine in the pulpit?"

Pemberton. "A very dim light indeed : but it was not long ere he set. What dreadful things sermons are for the most part !"

Dagentree. "Sometimes—I fear often. But I, as you know, affect the old Puritan theology, and haunt a quiet conventicle at W——, when I often have, as I had to-day, a sermon that sets one a-thinking."

Pemberton. "Each to his own taste. For my own part, I do not admire the Spurgeon and Little Bethel line, or the spiritual rule of grocers and tallow-chandlers."

Dagentree. "My dear fellow, of all shallow vulgarities, the vulgarity of gentility in religion is the meanest, and betrays want of breeding the most. In our dear, old, provincial England, we associate bishops and the church service with ladies and gentlemen; extempore prayers and earnest preaching with shop-keepers and the middle-class. But what a truly ignorant under-bred aspect there is in all this, as if any religion were worth professing, which did not obliterate all social distinctions, and put every one on a level ! I should like to send your vastly genteel worshippers to Holland, where all the ladies and gentlemen are Presbyterians."

Pemberton. "Still I like refinement in the pulpit, as well as everywhere else. I think a clergyman should be a gentleman, not only in the highest, but

in every sense ; and nothing but thorough education can accomplish that. A good man, no doubt, may drop his H's, but I prefer a good man who does them justice. Surely you must own that good taste revolts at the violent ecstatic style which is the staple of your Puritan ministrations."

Dagentree. "Nay! that is not the element which offends your too sensitive soul. What I find there, and what you think vulgar, is reality and earnestness. The Puritans never did the work negligently; and although a lounging, shallow, sneering generation think it witty to deride their speech and ways, they owe it to the Puritans that their ears, long as they may be, continue to be their own."

Pemberton. "I don't agree with you. I think they did as much harm as good, both to liberty and to religion. They made the first detestable, and the last ridiculous. England found it impossible to submit to the rule of such fellows, and threw it off in disgust."

Dagentree. "Read Comus, you retailer of exploded slanders, and say if the Puritanic type you find there be not the very model of high-bred intellectual courtesy, compared to which the manner and sentiments of the roisterers of the second Charles and James were those of uncouth blackguards?"

Pemberton. "Ah! John Milton—*non Anglus sed*

Angelus! But there were few such in the Barebones Parliament. Even he wrote that 'New Presbyterian was but Old Priest writ large,' with the intolerance without the cultivation or the learning of his prototype."

Dagentree. "John Milton was only one example, out of many of that age, who showed how truly noble earnestness in religion may be in conjunction with taste and scholarship, and how much diviner and more polished a spirit it is than either superstition or indifference."

Pemberton. "He quarrelled with his wife, however, and wrote books about her, which no gentleman should do."

Dagentree. "Doubtless he had reason. But it is easy to stamp the great and vigorous Puritan spirit with the errors and follies from which no school of thought can be free. Even at this day, while the upper crust of English society affects to deride it, not only are the masses leavened with it to the centre, but its essence percolates through all ranks, and is the true foundation of our greatness."

Pemberton. "Pray do not be eloquent and didactic. I am not a Jacobite, although I am not a Muggletonian or a Brownist. I admire Oliver Cromwell—partly because he knew very well how to deal with your Puritan friends. But Noll was a great man,

and I think a good one, too, as far as the company he kept would allow. I should not have disliked dining with him. No doubt he would have preached over his claret, but the sermon would have been worth hearing."

Dagentree. "If you had given old Noll a taste of such feebleness as you have displayed to me, he would have given you little of his sermon but the practical application."

Pemberton. "Well, I do wonder, after all, why preaching should be in general so weak and ineffective."

Dagentree. "The cause is partly fashion and partly indifference. Your preachers are far too fastidious about manner to think about matter. Vehemence is vulgar, energy is vulgar, Methodism, as it is called, is vulgar; and instead of thinking, as his only thought, how best to reach the conscience and the heart, the preacher thinks mainly of the turn of his sentences, the intonation of his voice, and his appearance in the pulpit. Do you think any one addressing Parliament or a jury in such a style would gain a hearing or a cause?"

Pemberton. "The places and audiences are very different."

Dagentree. "Only in this, that the earnestness may be misplaced in these cases, but in preaching never

can be. Do you really think they could preach as they do if their heart were in their preaching. If ever there was a theme to inspire, nay, transport an orator, it is that with which old Bompas professes once a week to deal. Yet, who to listen to a modern sermon, would ever discover from a tone, a gesture or a sentence, that these momentous interests were at stake?"

Pemberton. "What would you have? Would you have him discourse as Milton's Angel did to Adam, of predestination and free-will, to Hodge the ploughman, and Stokes the gamekeeper? To be sure, they could only slumber, as they did to-day; but they would not be a whit the better."

Dagentree. "Again I think you are wrong. If you only preach to Hodge that he should not get drunk, or beat his wife, Hodge has heard all that a many times afore; and probably thinks of it every time he enters a public-house, and has long ago set up a kind of score between his pot of beer, and the wrath of 't' parson' or t' 'squire.' If you want to reclaim Hodge, you must address him as you must address Madam. Once convince him of the reality of the things you preach, and he will listen all the more attentively, that his intellect is but little cultivated. You speak of vulgar ecstasies. But he only is a true orator who sways the minds of those to whom

he speaks. If he do that, he is a true artist; and the means by which he does it are of little moment. If he do not, though he speak with all the polished lore of Balliol or of Trinity, he is merely an impostor—a cumberer of the ground—a useless labourer in the vineyard.”

Pemberton. “Well, to my mind, the age has outgrown the religious enthusiasm of former days, which generally was another name for intolerance and persecution. Educated men are fortunately inclined to take a much more liberal view on all such questions.”

Dagentree. “I do not want to preach to you, Pemberton, and we had better finish our discussion, as you have nearly finished the bottle; unless indeed you want another glass or two of claret.”

Pemberton. “But I do want another glass or two of claret, and will submit to your sermon on that score. It will not be as dry as those of old Bompas, although I have no mind to be convinced of anything.”

Dagentree. “You know I think it unwholesome to argue after dinner. We had better adjourn my homily.”

Pemberton. “I mean to drink, and not to argue. So keep your temper, and proceed.”

Dagentree. “Then I must say that I entirely deny

the liberality of the age. It is out of sight the narrowest, most bigoted, and most intolerant age of the century. Only, bigotry takes another turn now-a-days. Formerly men burnt and were burnt, because some would not believe what others bid them believe. Now willingly would your modern bigot, with liberality ever on his lips, light the fires of Smithfield to burn his brother for believing what he does not believe."

Pemberton. "Excuse me for a moment. Don't you feel that sentiment to be folly? and don't you know that modern science has entirely altered the old landmarks of literal belief, and that we must read our Bibles, not with less reverence, but with more intelligence?"

Dagentree. "I do not undervalue, but on the contrary delight in and cultivate modern science. If there be an idiot who refuses to believe in science because its results are opposed to Scripture, I am glad to say I do not know him, and never heard of him. These researches are for me full of interest and admiration. I admire the army; but I despise and detest the camp-followers. In the present state of our scientific knowledge, no man can possibly draw any deduction from science which has the slightest bearing on the truth of Scripture; and he is a shallow pretender who attempts to do so."

Pemberton. "Can you really assert that geological discovery is consistent with the literal accuracy of the first chapter of Genesis?"

Dagentree. "The field of geology is a buried city, of which only a stone or two has as yet been excavated. No man can tell what full research may disclose. The science is at present so tottering and infantine—it speaks in such lisping words, and changes its language so often, that I take no heed of its utterances excepting as they foreshadow future discovery. The odd little conceptions of a prattling child make pleasant company, and sometimes stumble on great truths; but no one would ever think of acting on them; and yet the child may be the father of one of the giants of the world. The curse of science, at present, is the troop of camp-followers who run at its heels, and will never permit it to pursue its dignified march in peace, but must ever try to embroil it with religious belief, with which it has no warfare, and, in its present state, no connection. If the current of geological discovery or theory were to set in in favour of the Mosaic record, how the carping, snarling band would take themselves off, and scatter in all directions!"

Pemberton. "But do you not admit that the recent discoveries of science throw great doubt on there being any truth in the Mosaic account of the creation, and the antiquity of man?"

Dagentree. "No; assuredly not! not a spark or atom! Late researches have, I think, proved more clearly than it ever was proved before—first, that man is a very recent inhabitant of this planet; and secondly, that man has not been produced by any process of selection or development. It would, no doubt, be satisfactory to recognise in our acquaintances the lingering traces of the animal from which they sprung. It would solve many absurdities of character. But, for my part, I think the metamorphoses of heathen days more probable than natural selection. I believe in Apuleius more than I do in Darwin. A man may, no doubt, make a donkey of himself, but I hardly think a donkey can make himself a man."

Pemberton. "Well, I own I think Darwin a very masterly analyst, and I believe he has struck out a path of inquiry which will render great returns to science. He has certainly shown that the principle of natural selection exists; and has shown that it is at least possible that species may have originated in that way!"

Dagentree. "But look at the notes to the elder Darwin's 'Botanic Garden:' a very charming work, and full of genuine, but too much forgotten poetry. You will find the whole theory there, applied, no doubt, to plants, but containing the germ of all that

has been suggested since. But Darwin has left the origin of species, not where he found it, but darker than ever ; for he has proved that there ought to be no species at all ; and if his views were true, there could have been no such thing."

Pemberton. "I have some doubts if you quite appreciate or understand this theory of Darwin's. It is not a doctrine of development, but one of selection ; and although it may be, as you say, a long way still from demonstration, a wonderful number of coincident facts seem to point in that direction. Sir Charles Lyell, as you know, although sceptical at first, is now thoroughly satisfied."

Dagentree. "Yes ; but thirty years ago Cuvier and Buckland absolutely disbelieved. In that process of natural selection which goes on among schools of philosophy, in the struggle for subsistence, you may rely on it that the scientific limbs of 1900 will be very different from those of 1865 ; and I doubt if even the intermediate type will remain. It raises my choler to hear idiots go howling about theories as if they were demonstrations, when I know quite well that five years more will make them howl as loudly on the other side."

Pemberton. "Still, all your choler will not stop the progress of scientific research. You cannot shut your eyes to the fact that the great antiquity of man

is, if not proved already, on the very verge of demonstration."

Dagentree. "Do you think so? What say you to the difficulty of finding out these ancestors of yours? What a set of nincompoops they must have been not to have left, in I do not know how many millions of years, a book or a bone behind them. I do not rate the species very high, but it strikes me that your demonstration halts not a little."

Pemberton. "But civilisation is a very gradual process; and it is only in her higher and later stages that the intellectual powers of man become developed. It would take a long time, even under the most advantageous circumstances, for a Fiji islander to become a Bentham or a Mill."

Dagentree. "How long would you give him to become a pedant or a bore? Give him a fair start—let him read German metaphysics, drink German beer, and smoke German tobacco, and I will undertake to turn out your Fiji islander in two generations as dull, as conceited, and as intolerant as any Comtist among them."

Pemberton. "I wonder, Dagentree, you are not ashamed of indulging in such unreason. I take it for granted that you don't read German; and that is the real source of your bitterness."

Dagentree. "I own I was rude. But I dislike the

school, the tone of thought, the unreality and the pitiless hardness of the brotherhood. They are filled with the idea that man is an advancing animal, and that they are the types of progress. I can only say that if nature selected them for that purpose, she made a very singular choice. I, however, believe that the friends who sat on the ground and made themselves unpleasant to Job 3000 or 4000 years ago, were quite as intellectual as these wiseacres, quite as tiresome, and probably much better looking. Advancing, indeed! Has Egypt advanced since the Pharaohs? or Nineveh since Jonah preached in vain to the *doctrinaires* of that rationalistic city? Is Assyria more mighty than in the days of Nebuchadnezzar? Where is the Arabian lore which gave its vocabulary to science? Where the Greek and Roman praise, those teachers of mankind for all time? Is the Turk a nobler and stronger animal than when he thundered at the gates of Vienna? Pshah! what vain babble is all this! The Christian nations have indeed made progress, but your advancing sciolist would hardly find out the reason."

Pemberton. "There is much sophistry and more temper in your reasoning. What these men say—you need not glare at me like a caged hyæna—is, that the progress of which they speak is so gradual that an interval of 4000 years is not appreciable, and

that mankind, like the rest of external nature, is governed by natural laws, which have shaped his past and his present."

Dagentree. "My good friend, observe. That which has the aspect of a decanter, from which you have three times successively poured what seemed to be claret into the semblance of a glass, is empty. Owing, doubtless, to inevitable natural laws, you have consumed it all yourself, and impelled thereto, by the like necessity, wish for another. Truly, nature operates rapidly with Briggs, for here he is, decanter in hand. There! now I am refreshed, and ready to do battle. Tell me, I pray, what do you mean by nature? and what do you mean by her laws?"

Pemberton. "I am not a walking dictionary; but I take it, that by natural laws is to be understood that relation of matter to matter which is as much an essential of its existence as its size, shape, consistency, chemical affinities or properties, and which makes it inconsistent with its existence that in given circumstances it should not act or be acted on in a given way."

Dagentree. "Most lucid! But supposing your definition to have any merit, why nature, and why laws? What you have defined is nature, and therefore not the giver of a law, but the subject of it; and excepting these relations you speak of, which

obey the law, there is no such thing as nature by which they are affected. Then, why law? What you have described is merely sequence. Given a thirsty soul, yourself to wit, an inverted glass, and an open mouth, the liquor has been observed uniformly to descend. But that is all. If there be a law, some intelligence made it. Not nature, for she, if there be a she, obeys it. There is therefore a giver of law above nature, which is the very result at which your teachers do not wish to arrive. What of the argument from design?"

Pemberton. "I think it less conclusive than I did at Trinity."

Dagentree. "I find, however, that philosophers can use it very nimbly when it suits them. The worthy professor who sees in nature no traces of a Creator, will find in a wretched piece of flint, as he peers enchanted through his spectacles, the long lost proofs of Pre-Adamite man. The flint was probably fabricated for his special benefit, by a very modern specimen of the species; but if there be no argument from design, O ye Anthropologists, what hope is there for you? But I shall finish my sermon, and by way of practical application, shall tell you a dream I once had; and in spite of Dr Watts, a man may tell a dream now and then, and not talk of eating and drinking.

THE AEROLITE.

"You are well aware that meteoric stones have long been a puzzle and a torment to philosophers. Some think they are generated in the atmosphere, others that they are fragments of a shattered comet, or bits of the moon. I, for my part, always thought that they were minute planets, which found their ultimate destiny in our mother earth.

"I once saw one of these waifs of the solar system which fell near Gloucester. An odd round mass it was, about as large as a cannon ball, and composed, I was told, in large part of iron. Having been present when a circle of philosophers examined it, and much amused and excited by the discussions I had heard, I retired under the influence of a Mayonnaise salad, and like Bunyan dreamt a dream.

"I dreamt I was myself a philosopher, imbued with all the complacency common to the species. After much wrangle, I had been the fortunate competitor for the aerolite, and had set myself to examine my treasure through the microscope; and discover how much iron and nickel the stranger might contain.

"To the naked eye, the surface appeared smooth and polished; but under my microscope, its aspect entirely changed. I found undulations and excres-

cences of a marked and singular kind ; and as I gazed, the ball began to assume appearances which filled me with amazement. I saw hills and valleys, lofty mountains and river beds, verdure and the remains of trees and houses—these last shattered and destroyed. Looking still more attentively at some black dots, which here and there were huddled into corners, I saw the semblance of some organic being, and at last, to my great surprise, one of the dots began to wriggle, rose to its microscopic legs, and in a somewhat defiant attitude, confronted me with a bold and self-confident mien.

“What I might have felt had I seen this when awake I do not know ; but in my dream, I was enchanted with my discovery. So far from being afraid of my new acquaintance, I hastened to cultivate him, in terror lest he should disappear before I became the sole confidant of his mission to earth. But he was a very cool hand. At first, his dimensions were in proportion to the globe he inhabited, but he began to swell and increase in size, until he fairly stepped out of his original sphere, as people sometimes do ; and, at last, flung himself down with a jaunty air in my favourite arm-chair by the fireside.

“‘An uncommon tumble, to be sure, old fellow,’ were the words he addressed to me.

“‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I hope you don’t feel seriously hurt.’

“‘Shaken a little,’ he said : ‘it was precious cold coming through your detestable climate—a bitter east wind. Does it always blow in this way in this trumpery planet of yours?’

“‘I thought his tone offensive, considering where he came from ; but I replied, ‘Pray, draw nearer the fire. But I thought in your position—I mean in such—a-hem !—meteoric substances, a considerable amount of heat was usually evolved.’

“‘Meteoric substances ! None of your chaff, old double eye. If our planet was not as large as yours, it was a deal more intelligent. We don’t rate you much above Saturn, and he is the dullest of the lot.’

“‘Why, what do you know of the matter?’ rejoined I, testily, for the fellow’s impudence was irritating.

“‘A good deal, I should think ; and my being here proves it. I was right, I knew I was, and the only drawback to my triumph is, that that old ass Hitch-and-Kick’ (at least so he pronounced it) ‘lies there as dead as a door-nail. But what bounds can he set to the intellect of an inhabitant of Fluoral?’

“‘That is rather a pretty name. I don’t recollect to have heard it before,’ said I, jotting it down in my note-book.

“‘Ah ! take it down. I can give you a wrinkle or two better than that, which may assist the wretched dullards to whom you belong.’

“‘Out with it,’ said I, losing all patience. ‘Tell me who you are, where you come from, and what you mean to do, for you can’t stay here all night.’

“‘Give me a glass of something stiff and a pipe,’ said the unabashed meteoric one; ‘and when the chill goes off, you shall have my tale.’

“Of course, I humoured him; and as men of science always have a glass of grog and a pipe, the materials were ready at hand; and after my mysterious visitor had drunk and smoked for some time in silence, he thus proceeded:—‘That mass of matter which now lies on your table was, three days ago, one of the brightest ornaments of the solar system. Its inhabitants were noted for their intelligence, and they spent all their time in philosophical researches. We know all about you, old boy, and the British Association; and we don’t think much of you, either.’

“‘Pray avoid vituperation, sir,’ I interposed, meekly, ‘it is not consistent with a spirit of philosophical inquiry.’

“‘Ain’t it tho’? There is precious little spirit of any other kind among some of their number.’

“‘May I ask how you became acquainted with their views?’

“‘With all the pleasure in life,’ said he, stretching his legs before the fire, and smoking with much earnestness. ‘The fact is, we were a people of great scientific research. Our glasses were wonderful, and

we could analyse not only the light but the sounds which come from the most of the planets.'

" 'You astonish me '——

" 'Fact, old boy ; in our orbit round the sun we, at times, got close to several of you (too close as it has turned out), and our instruments, I assure you, enabled us to know what was going on. I will make no comparisons ; but you were dull—decidedly, hopelessly dull. Mercury and Mars were lively ; Jupiter, very sensible ; but you and Saturn, as I said, unquestionably the slowest of the team. Our instruments would scarcely work with you at all. It is not so much the sound as the intelligence which affects them. We tried the House of Commons once ; but the result was too dismal.'

" 'And the British Ass——' faltered I ; but he caught at the word.

" 'Quite as bad, quite as bad. Some were heard, no doubt—but frightfully green, and all wrong, though clever lads, in their way.'

" 'But how came you here ?'

" 'Well, don't hurry me. In our world of Fluoral, we had nothing but intellect—philosophy, the most sublimated and refined. No labour, no work, no law ; nothing but intellect. We were divided into two rival factions, the Neverists and Foreverists. The Neverists maintained that our planet Fluoral never

existed. The Foreverists that it would and must exist for ever. I was the leader of the Neverists, and poor Hitch-and-Kick there was the chosen chief of the Foreverists. He and I were rival candidates for the highest professorship in our highest University. I had delivered a masterly address on the non-existence of matter, and Hitch-and-Kick had just proved the eternity of matter, and of that particular sphere of matter called Fluoral, in the precisely identical form which he said it always had presented, and always would present. He concluded amid thunders of applause, which rung in my jealous ears, and even my cultivated reason was half persuaded by the spell, when suddenly came a crash and a rush. We were all crumpled up together. I was conscious of being hurled through space, and shot with a whirr through icy clouds, till at last I rested where you found me. Alas! poor Hitch-and-Kick. Farewell, unlucky Foreverist! Even this calamity could I stand with equanimity, couldst thou look up to own that I was right. I knew it could not go for ever—and it didn't!

“ ‘But our world will,’ said I, with sudden desperation.

“ ‘Yours! I could tell you a secret about that. But no; I will not distress you. Bye bye, old goggles.’ And with that he made for the door.

“ ‘Professor!’ I called wildly after him.

“‘Lauk! what be meister a holloring at?’ exclaimed the voice of the kitchenmaid.

“‘Stop the professqr,’ roared I.

“‘Good lack,’ screamed the damsel, shrilly, and banged her door indignantly, as she shut it. I was alone in my room,—the fire extinguished, the candles burning low, one glass of grog, empty, on the table, but not a trace of the Aerolite.”

“I vow, Pemberton, you are asleep.”

“Would I were,” answered I.

CHAPTER XIX.

EVENING AT HOME.

WE did not go to Mrs Carrington's on Monday, as Dagentree was engaged in parish business. I therefore, again, wooed the Muse of Justice in the morning, and rode out in the afternoon. My ride was uncomfortable and dreamy. Of what colour my dreams were I cannot be expected to say ; or whether Sophia Wendover or Mrs Carrington held the first place there. I fear the blotting-paper bore witness, in the artistic devices with which I had covered it in the morning, to the inconstancy of man. I certainly liked Mrs Carrington very much ; there was a fascination about her, which a little overpowered my more sober judgment ; for she looked like what I had always dreaded, a woman with a history. Neither did it at all please me that an attorney like Rendelson should be on the terms with her, or have the power over her, which had been indicated at the Dashwoods. But notwithstanding all this, I was, for that afternoon at least, under the spell ; and sauntered, with rein

relaxed and quiet pace, through the umbrageous lanes which I have described elsewhere.

I was returning homewards, when coming to a sharp angle of the road, masked by a very high hawthorn hedge, I heard voices, apparently in sharp altercation. They were man and woman, and I heard the latter exclaim, as I approached the turn—

“If that be all you can do for me, I’d best go back.”

On turning the corner, I came in front of the speakers, who were apparently walking slowly up the road. The man was my friend, the photographer; the woman, a very striking-looking person. She was above the middle height, dark, with flashing eyes, and regular, well-cut features. Her expression was lofty and sorrowful, and her whole appearance suggested Creole blood. All trace of discomposure had left the man’s face, if it had ever rested there; but the woman’s countenance was still heated and animated with displeasure. The former made no sign of recognition; the latter gazed earnestly at me, although she said nothing. They passed on; and the incident made no impression on me.

Our dinner-party proved a great success. The Wendover contingent included Mr Wendover himself, his wife, and Sophia of course, looking radiant—a whisper of jealousy said to me, almost triumphant.

Admiral Trevor, who was their guest, made one of the party; and so did our friend the Doctor. One of the Dashwood girls, and a brother, whom I had not seen, completed the circle; and a merrier dinner-table I never sat at.

The Sophia affair was making palpable and ridiculous progress; and my anchorite looked even more absurd than men in such a position generally do. After all, I did not grudge it to him, although I owned to a certain amount of consciousness regarding that quarter; but Miss Dashwood fell to my share; and I endeavoured, by, I fear, rather boisterous attentions, to cover the quiet confidences of my host and Sophia. Mamma was very propitious. "Well she might be," I said to myself. Mr Wendover was a typical member of Parliament, with a head full of bills and divisions, and tales, not badly told, of political celebrities.

The conversation came to turn on secret correspondence, spies, and Major André. At last, in reference to the subject, the Admiral volunteered to tell us a real incident which had happened to his uncle.

THE CIPHER.

The story I am about to tell relates to an incident in the history of England which is but little known,

and which you will not find in books, but one **which** nevertheless had a great effect on her destinies.

About the beginning of this century, while the Revolutionary wars were raging, communication in cipher was naturally very prevalent; and ingenuity was taxed to the utmost, on one hand to invent, and on the other to detect, the medium used in secret correspondence. As a rule, the decipherer had beaten the cipherer; and no known method was secure of detection. If conventional signs merely were used, the recurrence of the different symbols gave a key easily followed out. Some ingenious spirits corresponded by reference to the pages and lines of particular editions of particular books; others by an agreed-on vocabulary. But these last methods, although they might preserve the secret, disclosed what was often quite as dangerous, that there was a secret. I am about to tell you of a plan which for long was not only undetected, but unsuspected.

It was at the time when the first Napoleon had assembled his fleet and transports at Brest, with the ostensible, and, as is generally believed, the real view of making a descent on this island. The greatest precautions were observed by this Government in regard to correspondence from France, and an amount of espionage was practised at the Post-Office, which left subsequent performances in that line far

behind. The national excitement was intense, and the political departments of the Government were administered with an iron sway.

My uncle, Sir George Trevor, was, as all the world then knew, high in the Admiralty; and as it was from him that I heard this anecdote, its veracity may of course be depended on.

The despatches to and from the Admiralty were the subject of the greatest vigilance, and the most stringent regulations. The clerks were not permitted to send or receive any letters which were not first submitted to the chief clerk; and it was believed that letters addressed even to their private residences were frequently opened at the Post-Office.

At the time I speak of, the chief clerk was an elderly man of the name of Parker—a wizened, wiry, dapper individual, so imbued with the official tincture of Whitehall that it had become second nature to him. He lived, and breathed, and thought, and slept solely for the Admiralty; and knew no other pleasure or care. He was, withal, a genial and kindly soul, keen and energetic in the affairs of his office, and in all others a mere child.

He had assumed as his private secretary a young fellow of the name of Beaumont, who was one of the most promising subordinates in the establishment. He was a modest, unassuming man, very good-looking,

with a countenance and air suggestive of depression and melancholy. He was evidently of good education, and probably well-born also, for his manners were easy, and indicated good breeding. He was a native of Jersey, and had been introduced to the notice of the Admiralty authorities by some influential member of Parliament. He was much liked in the office, and discharged its duties to perfection.

One morning Parker presented himself before my uncle with a visage pale with woe, and trembling with excitement.

"Why, what is the matter, Parker? Has Buona-
parte come?"

"He may have, for aught I know," said Parker.
"Things are all wrong, Sir George,!"

"What is wrong?"

"The letters are wrong. There is a spy among us. I have known it for long: now I am quite sure; but I cannot find him out."

Parker went on to explain that he had for some time suspected that some one in the office communicated their private information and despatches outside. He had redoubled his precautions; but more than ever confirmed in his suspicions, was entirely baffled in his endeavours to detect the culprit.

"But, Parker," said my uncle, "how do you come to be so sure that your secrets have transpired?"

"By the funds, Sir George. They answer to the news as surely as the bell down-stairs does to the bell-rope. I find them going up and down as if they were sitting in the office," said Parker, personifying the Stock Exchange for the moment

"Have all the letters to the clerks been examined strictly?"

"Yes; I read them all myself."

"Find nothing in them?"

"Mighty little. Some are from home, and some from friends, and most of them from sweethearts," said Parker, twisting his face into a grim smile; "and rum things they say in them."

"And the young men's letters, are they rum, too?"

"They are more careful-like, as they know I am to see them: but, Lord save you, sir, they are all stuff; not a ha'porth of harm in them."

"This matter must be seen to," said my uncle: "I have had my own misgivings on the same subject. Bring me all the letters which come to, and are sent by the clerks, for the next week. There is no reason why you should have all the rum things to yourself."

So my uncle had the letters for a week, and found them very much such as Parker had described them.

The suspicious symptoms increased; the Stock Exchange responded more sensitively than ever: but

not the slightest ground for suspecting any one transpired. My uncle was bewildered, and Parker was rapidly verging to insanity.

"It is certainly not the clerks," said my uncle. "There is no treason there," said he, pushing back the letters of the day. "By the way, how does young Beaumont get on? She seems a nice creature, that sister of his, to judge by her letters."

"He is the best hand in the office, a long sight; and his sister is a very sweet, ladylike creature. They are orphans, poor things; and he supports her out of his salary. She called at the office two months ago, and I gave him leave to see her for a few minutes in my room. But he knew it was against rules, and has not seen her here again."

"But what are we to do?" said my uncle. "I think I will speak to the First Lord."

So he spoke to the First Lord, who thought the affair serious enough.

"It must be in the letters," said he.

"It cannot be in the letters," said my uncle.

"As you please," said the chief; "but although you cannot find it there, perhaps another can. I would try an expert."

My uncle had no faith in experts, or Bow Street runners, and mistrusted them. But he could not refuse to try the experiment suggested. So the most

experienced decipherer in London was summoned into council, and to him the letters of the day were secretly submitted.

He read them all very carefully, looked at them in the light, and looked at the light through them. At last he put them all aside, excepting one from Elinor Beaumont.

"Who is the lady who writes this?" said the taciturn man of skill at last.

"A very sweet young woman," said Parker, smartly, "sister of my private secretary."

"Does she write often?"

"Yes; she is his only correspondent, and writes about twice a week."

"Where does she live?"

"She lives in Jersey," Beaumont told me. "Their father was in business there."

"And does she always write about the same kind of things—Aunt's rheumatism, pic-nics, squires' tea-parties, and the like?"

"Much the same, excepting when she speaks of Beaumont himself."

"Hum!" said the expert.

"Well, sir," said my uncle, who was rather impatient of the man of skill's pomposity, "and what may 'Hum!' mean? Have the young woman and her aunt's rheumatism done the mischief?"

"Hum! She dates from Fleet Street?"

"And why should she not date from Fleet Street, sir?"

"I should be sorry to prevent her," said the unmoved philosopher. "Has this correspondence continued long?"

"Oh, yes—a couple of years or so; but not nearly so regularly as lately."

"For how long regularly?"

"About two months."

"That is about the time when you first suspected the betrayal of confidence?"

"Really, my friend, if you can't see farther into a millstone than that, you may give up the profession," said my uncle. "Take my word for it, the Beaumonts have nothing to do with it. Rubbish!"

"Hum!" And with that the man of skill took his hat and departed, saying he would return in two days. The two days, however, were five before he came back; and was again closeted with my uncle and Parker, with whom he had fallen into great disfavour.

"Wants to make a job," said the latter—"a regular humbug."

"Sir George," said the regular humbug, "has Mr Beaumont a locked desk in his room?"

"Yes, sir," said Parker; "he has."

"Have you a key which will open it?"

"I have—and what of that?"

"I wish to have that desk opened without his knowledge, and the contents brought to me."

And on what pretence," said my uncle, "do you propose to put this insult on a man against whom there is no reasonable ground of suspicion, and who has not been allowed to speak for himself?"

"There need be no insult, for he will know nothing of it; neither will any one else."

"I will not permit it, sir."

"Hum! Then I can do no more in the business."

"But," said Parker, whose official notions made him unwilling to break off the negotiations in this manner, "what pretence have you for doing this to Mr Beaumont, and not to the other clerks?"

"Shall I tell you? There is no such person as Elinor Beaumont, and the address in Fleet Street is a notorious haunt of suspected foreigners."

"Good gracious!" said my uncle, changing colour, "you don't say that?"

"It is the fact; but you will see the necessity of being cautious and silent in the matter. Detection hangs on a thread as it stands, and a whisper will break it."

"What do you mean," said Parker, "about Elinor Beaumont? I have seen her."

"There is no Elinor Beaumont in Jersey. I sent, and have ascertained the fact."

"I am sure there is some mistake about all this, which Beaumont can clear up. Let us send for him."

"If you do, the game is up. I trust, in fact, he does not know of my visits. We cannot be too cautious in these matters."

"Pedantic ass!" muttered my uncle; "but I suppose we had better give him his own way. If you meet Parker and me here at seven to-night, we shall have this wonderful desk opened, and your great discoveries shall be made."

They met again that evening. The desk was opened by Parker; and a bundle of letters, carefully packed up, all from Elinor Beaumont, and a quantity of circulars, playbills, and shop receipts were handed to the expert.

That gentleman read through the letters, and seemed much struck by the last. "Read that," said he, handing it to my uncle. As the letter is important, I give it entire.

120 FLEET STREET, *Sept.* 24th, 1803.

MY DEAR CHARLES,—Although we had an adverse wind all the way, we made without difficulty the port we were bound for. My aunt, in spite of the weight of her fifty years, enjoyed the trip much, and is ready

to sail again. I hope you will think of sending the line you promised on the 25th, and come yourself, as our party is now much smaller, and we should enjoy the visit.

When I was in London last week I saw our cousin Harry, fresh from Windsor. There is little change to be observed in him—not as much as you would expect. Come to us on Friday.—Yours very afft.,

ELINOR B.

My uncle read this out aloud, from beginning to end, and then he said, "Do you see anything suspicious in that? It seems to me very innocent."

"Hum! It may be. Was there anything else in the desk?" said he, addressing Parker.

"You may go and look," growled that potentate. And he led the way, the expert following.

The desk was quite empty, with the exception of two or three scraps of waste paper. On one of these the expert pounced, and returned with an air of elation to the other room. He then unfolded this scrap of paper, and disclosed a half-sheet, exactly the size of the paper on which Elinor Beaumont's letters were written, in which oblong holes at intervals had been cut.

He then placed this half-sheet over the letter, and handed both, thus placed, to my uncle, whose aston-

ished eyes read the following words, which the holes left visible.

"Fleet wind-bound. Fifty sail of the line. 25 smaller. Should the wind change, expect us on Friday."

"The DEVIL!" said my uncle; "and Nelson ordered off to the West Indies!"

Then was there, as you may suppose, hurrying and scurrying, and running and chasing, and despatching of Government couriers, and semaphore telegraphs, and carrier pigeons, and all the old-world means of communication then in fashion. The key, thus obtained, disclosed the whole correspondence, which turned out to be a connected series of letters from the French Government, smuggled into Jersey. The result history knows: the intended invasion was abandoned, and Napoleon went elsewhere.

"But what put you on the scent?" asked my uncle afterwards, with many apologies to the expert.

"I suspected the trick from the first, although it was a very good specimen of it. The letters were too innocent, and had too little point in them. But they were done with admirable skill. The grammar was complete: and the little dots or marks which bunglers use to guide them in writing the words which are to be read were entirely absent. The way in which the deception is effected is this. The correspondents, before commencing, take a sheet of

paper and cut holes in it, which, of course, in two half-sheets exactly correspond. They each take one half-sheet : and when a letter is to be written, the writer so arranges the words, that those intended to be read shall appear in the holes when the half-sheet is placed over the paper, which is of the same size. When his correspondent receives the letter, he places his half-sheet over it, and reads off the words, as you did. The difficulty, which was so well conquered in this case, is to make the sense run fluently, and to prevent any visible break in the writing. Without the half-sheet with the holes in it, no one can have the slightest clue to the real meaning.

“My suspicions, once aroused, were confirmed by the inquiries which I made. The whole story about the sister was a fabrication. The letters did come from Jersey, the answers went to Fleet Street, to the charge of very notorious agents. But if our friend had not been fool enough to leave his half-sheet in his desk, we might have groped in vain for the mystery.”

Beaumont disappeared that night, and was never heard of again at the Admiralty. It transpired afterwards that some accomplice had warned him of the expert's visits to the Admiralty, and his inquiries in Jersey. He had made an attempt to get admittance to his room, but was scared by the sounds he heard ; and contrived to escape to France. The lady

who acted the sister, and who visited the Admiralty, partly to put the authorities off their guard, and probably also to interchange the key to the cipher, was a Parisian celebrity, who both before and afterwards was renowned for her daring in political intrigue.

"And an uncommon good hint too, Miss Wendover," said the Doctor. "Suppose you and I interchange our magic leaves when we go to the drawing-room."

"If you had suggested that in confidence, I might have thought of it; but now I shall be asked for my magic leaf whenever I get a note from you."

"Don't be afraid; you can make a wrong one, and put them off the scent."

"What a strange story that is you told me!" said Mrs Wendover to me. "Are you sure it was the photographer?"

"I think so; but people's faces look so different at different times that I may have been mistaken."

"I must have these people looked after," said Mr Wendover. "Perhaps he is a Yankee spy."

CHAPTER XX.

IDENTITY.

DOCTOR. "The human face is a very singular thing. I have often wondered whether there be such a thing, or whether what we think we see is an *eidolon*, or image, present only to our imaginations."

Dagentree. "I should have thought your glass taught you with sufficient clearness, if you ever look in one."

Doctor. "There lies one cause of my scepticism. The fellow I see in the glass is not the same fellow, but a great variety of familiar friends. I know one fellow my glass exhibits who is really a good kind of man, cheery, benevolent, not ill-looking, and very glad to see me. I have real pleasure in contemplating him, and he seems to share my feelings entirely. But I know a very different dog who lives in the same place, a scowling, ill-conditioned, discontented brute, without the slightest resemblance in feature, complexion, or expression to the other one. This is

the gentleman I usually shave ; and ugh ! how I hate him. Then there are a great many others. One comes smirking up to me with a priggish smile ; another—and he comes very often—has a softened, melancholy, sentimental air. A third is tragic, and a fourth comic. But I give you my life, not a mother's son of them is like the other."

We laughed at our friend's earnestness.

Doctor. "Ay, ay, laugh on an' ye will. But looking in the glass is no laughing matter. Did ye ever know a man laugh when he was looking in the glass?"

Pemberton. "No ; the melancholy smile is the true type. But I have caught my own reflection in double mirrors, when in the act of laughing, and a more revolting Yahoo I never saw."

Doctor. "Did ye ever bow to yourself when ye met? A Dublin friend of mine did that when he was walking up a staircase which had a mirror at the top. 'I wonder,' says he to me, 'who my seedy-looking friend is, but I have seen his snob-bish face somewhere.' I laughed, but I had not the heart to tell him why, and he never found out."

Dagentree. "No wonder, then, Doctor, when you don't know your own face, that we should forget those of other people. It is one of the most tiresome

infirmities of mortality that one forgets faces. I do believe they change, as you say."

Doctor. "Yes, I believe many a friend is lost, and many an enemy made, on no better reason. You dance with a pretty girl, you think she liked you, and her image flits before you all night, but you pass her in the Park next day with a haughty stare, and she cuts you the next time you meet. All your recognition was a zany-like wonder where you had seen that beautiful apparition before. Or you meet a man in Pall Mall from whom you yesterday obtained a favour. You vainly attempt that oft-tried task of trying to look as if you recollected him, and after a few inane stammers from you, he quits you in disgust. As you reach St James's Street you suddenly wake up to a consciousness of what you have done; but it is one of those sins for which there is no repentance."

Admiral. "Talking of St James's Street, I remember that old Scott of the Heavies, while coming out of Brook's one day, was stopped by a gentlemanlike man, whom he thought he recognised, with a very hearty salutation. Scott was one of the best of fellows, and the most jovial, good-tempered of members of Parliament; so he slid his arm through that of his newly-found friend, and they walked down towards St Stephen's in the most amicable

manner. They discussed mutual friends, and India, and Paris, and were so much pleased at their meeting after long separation that they agreed to dine together the next day. Unluckily, however, when near the foot of Parliament Street they got into a trifling but hot dispute on recruiting in the army.

“‘You thought very differently at Malta, though,’ said his friend.

“‘Malta!’ roared Scott, ‘I never was in Malta in my life.’

“‘Not in Malta! Why, it was there we knew each other. Don’t you remember the orange groves and the pretty San Carlottis?’ Then abruptly stopping, and looking up in Scott’s face, he exclaimed, ‘Never saw you before,’ turned on his heel, and vanished. Scott never saw him again, and never found who he was or for whom he had been taken. He admitted he could not remember his name, but felt sure he knew him.”

Dagentree. “It is a curious mental process that hunting for a name. How you rummage among the cupboards of the brain, and bring up a withered leaf from this one, or a long-forgotten landscape from that, or an odour unperceived for years from a third, and how at last they all fit in, and reproduce the well-remembered scene, and the names which acted in it. Ah, me! how sad these dissolving visions sometimes

are—how vividly they return for a moment, only to vanish again into darkness !”

Doctor. “ Pretty sentiment ! But I never talk sentiment, and never allow it to be talked if I can help it. Not that I don’t think sentiment, like every one else, ay, and think it as prettily, and say all the sweet things about it which fools put into words. But where is the good of adding to the sad thoughts, or the enervating weariness of this depressing world, by speaking of them ? I like fun and mirth, not because I think them, but because I can’t think them without the outward expression to help me. Fun is better than drink ; but drink is better than sentiment ;

‘ It gies us wit ; it gies us lair ;
It pangs us fu’ o’ knowledge.’

And since I have quoted the only Scotchman I ever read of who deserved to be an Irishman, from his love of fun and of whisky, let me tell you a very romantic and curious story which happened in the picturesque but then not too tidy metropolis of Scotland.

THE MYSTERIOUS STUDENT.

“ In my earlier years, I studied for a session at Edinburgh. It was in Burke’s year, not that of Edmund Burke, but of another countryman of the same name, and not less celebrated. The number, the atrocity, and the cool speculative motives of this

fiend's misdeeds, approached genius in their way; and in the excitement of his trial and execution all other topics were forgotten. I shall not easily forget the singular fever of the public mind during these few weeks. I was myself present at the trial, and witnessed the spectacle of the greatest criminal of the century being defended by the first counsel at the bar of Scotland. A rumour had gone abroad that no counsel could be found to appear for such a monster; and as a testimony to the duty of counsel under all circumstances, the most celebrated advocates of the day, without fee or reward, defended this gang of murderers in the face of a torrent of public prejudice.

"The afternoon of the day on which Burke was executed was distinguished by a first-rate college row. The students at Edinburgh are, in general, a more sedate and graver set than Oxford undergraduates, and town and gown riots are not by any means an established institution. But the students of Edinburgh, like its mob, have, when roused, always been a formidable and dangerous body; and on this occasion, the police having intruded into the quadrangle to preserve order among the crowd which hurried to the dissecting-room, a battle royal had ensued, attended by some severe injuries, and resulting in a triumphant and glorious defeat of the authorities.

To celebrate this propitious event, a supper-party assembled that evening in a tavern called the 'Rainbow,' which, if I remember right, hangs in mid-air close by the 'triumphant arch which spans' the ancient Nor' Loch. The party consisted of some fifteen or twenty students, the leaders in the conflict of the day, most of them men of ability as well as sinew, and some of whom have since risen to considerable reputation. It may be easily supposed that wit, and chaff, and song circulated with none the less vivacity that their morning's battle had been successful.

"The chair was occupied by the bard and satirist of the college, a fellow of infinite jest, who made his mark on the world afterwards, but who at this time was mainly famed and feared for the sarcastic and biting power of his humour. Opposite him sat the prince of students—tall, handsome, reckless, flashing with the exuberance of youthful spirit, and a flow of convivial fancy that I have never known equalled.

"Among the others were two, who figure in my story. One was a student named Johnstone, the Thersites of the circle—a disagreeable specimen of a stamp of man which is generally to be found in every circle, without either wit or talent, excepting the wit or talent to make others feel uncomfortable. Bold, and unscrupulous, and quick to see and seize on the

weaknesses of others, he was a *flagellum*, a fly-blister; people feared to make him their friend, and still more to make him their enemy, and so he extorted from hate what he never would have obtained from love, and was admitted to the most select *coterie* of the University.

"The other was a stalwart, handsome young Irishman, who had done mighty execution in the *mêlée* of the day; caring but little, after the temperament of his nation, about the merits of the conflict, but hitting right and left as his leader told him. He was an open-browed, Spanish-looking son of Erin, half-rollicking, half-sad, in expression, who was winding up a happy day with a happy night: he had had a fight in the morning, and had a frolic in the evening. His name was Power, a medical student who had been but a week or two in Edinburgh. He was consequently an entire stranger to the others, and had been invited to make one of the party, solely on the strength of his fist.

"The chairman, after many a gibe and anecdote had gone round, rose to propose the toast of the evening:—'Confusion to the police, and bad dreams to Bailie Rintoul.' (In those days the town council ruled over the college, and the obnoxious Bailie had given the orders to the police.) 'As to the first part of the toast,' he said, 'it was superfluous, a pleonasm,

for the police were in such confusion already, that nothing the company could drink could add to it. Such a rabble rout had never before been witnessed since Proteus

‘Pecus egit altos
Visere montes,’

which he would render to mean, that his friend the vice, who was Protean enough, drove back the brutes to the High Street. As to the Bailie, the sentiment expressed in the toast was suitable. His normal state was slumber. He slept on the bench of Justice, for he saw him in that state, on a solitary and melancholy episode in his, the chairman’s, otherwise blameless life. He slept in church, for he heard him on’——

“‘Another solitary and melancholy episode,’ suggested the vice.

“‘Order there! He heard him snore, and from its vigour and constancy the occupation was manifestly habitual. But if Homer sometimes slept, the Bailie sometimes awakes: as he did to shame and defeat to-day. He is asleep again by this time. Bad dreams to him, with all the honours.’

“So with gibe and jest the evening wore on, and Power, warming with the wine and the excitement, added his full share to the evening’s amusement. Every one was cordial and courteous to him except-

ing Johnstone, who seemed rather jealous of his popularity, all the more that one or two shafts, levelled at Power without the latter perceiving them, had been rather roughly warded off by the vice.

“ At last he also rose to propose a toast. ‘ It was,’ he said, ‘ the Sister Isle, and our gallant allies, among whom,’ said he, breaking into a racy brogue, of which he was quite a master, ‘ I need not particularise our friend over the way. Who he is, I do not profess to know. He came to us suddenly, and, like most of his countrymen, will probably so depart; where he lives I do not know, for his countrymen seldom disclose their habitat; but if pugnacity and muscle—the fruits of that choice esculent of his native land—will make a man famous, famous he will be. May his hat never be shabbier, be his coat never more threadbare. May the rats fly his garret, the mice leave his sausages in peace, and may his tick be extended to a week.’

“ The undisguised insolence of Johnstone’s address did not detract from his vivacity, and the audience laughed and applauded. Power rose to return thanks with unruffled mien, and spoke with far more accent than before. ‘ He was proud and plased, he was, at the kindness of the jintleman. If he wore his coat till he was tired of the company, it’s little but threads would be left of it; and if he could listen for ever to

such eloquence, the mice were welcome to his dinner. He was proud of the notice of the company. Long life to them, and the more shindies the better, if they always ended in a blow-out, or whether they did or not. As to the worthy gossoon who had proposed his health, he had made his acquaintance under circumstances which bound them together, for he (Power) caught him in his arms when Sergeant Macbean (Cromwell's curse upon him!) with one hand on collar, and the other on croup, dropped him over the balustrades like a half-quarter of corn.'

"The shouts which greeted this allusion, which was literally true, stung Johnstone to the quick. Seizing his tumbler, he flung its contents in the speaker's face, and then rushed from the room.

"Great commotion of course ensued. Power was white and furious with rage, and in his first transports nearly vented it on those who tried to prevent him from following his assailant. He calmed down after a while, but took no more part in the evening's festivities, and was overheard to say that he would have his life. He refused, coldly, all offers, which were good-naturedly made, to act as mediators in the matter, and left the party early and alone.

"The next news which the college circle heard was four days afterwards. It was reported that

Johnstone had been found dead in the 'common stair,' as the staircase to separate storys, or flats, is called in Edinburgh, in which Power's rooms were. The report turned out to be only too true. A policeman said that a man had rushed hurriedly past him about 5 o'clock (it was January) and exclaimed, 'There is a man dying in the stair No 27,' and passed on. He went to the entry, and on the landing close to Power's lodgings, he found a man stretched on the stone floor. He raised him and found that he was quite dead. He had a severe cut over the eye. His collar was thrown open, and he had faint marks of pressure round his neck. On conveying him to the police office, he was recognised as the unhappy student. He was found to have died, as the medical men thought, from concussion of the brain, accompanied by strangulation. Their opinion was that the deceased had been seized by the throat, and thrown violently down. His watch and money were undisturbed.

"Little as Johnstone was liked, this sad and tragic end made a deep and melancholy impression on his circle: and thoughts naturally turned to his altercation with Power, and its probable result. On inquiring it appeared that Power had not been seen at college since the supper-party; he had not been seen at his lodgings since Johnstone had been found.

Things looked so suspicious that a warrant was issued for his apprehension.

“ The second night after the murder was discovered, Power was apprehended walking quietly along the South Bridge, in the direction of his lodgings. When seized he at first resisted, and demanded to know what the officers meant by their violence ; but on being shown the warrant, at once submitted, simply saying that they were wrong, and would find out that they were so.

“ He was detained in the police cells all night, and in the morning was taken before the sheriff. The officials were proceeding to take what in Scotland is called his declaration—that is, any statement the accused may think fit to make—when the prisoner said :—

“ ‘ It may save you all trouble, gentlemen, if you understand for onst that I do not intend to answer any questions.’

“ In vain they pressed him to explain where he had spent the two preceding days : he remained absolutely silent. He evinced neither indignation nor sorrow ; and was not apprehensive or excited in the slightest degree : but speak he would not, and the authorities did not know what to make of him.

“ Several of his friends visited him ; but although he received them courteously, he showed no desire

for their society, at least, for the first two or three days. As time went on, his natural gaiety seemed to return, and he would chat away in his cell as if no such charge as one of murder hung over him. The Crown inquiry was completed: he was committed for trial, and served with an indictment; and his friend the vice, who was studying for the law, urged him to employ a solicitor for his defence. To this he consented, and a very worthy and well-known practitioner paid him a visit in prison.

“‘A very melancholy business this, Mr Power.’

“‘Faith it is, Mr Stuart: I am very sorry for that poor devil’s mother.’

“‘But it is very serious for yourself.’

“‘So they tell me: but somehow I cannot look grave enough on it. They say I may be hanged; but for the life of me I cannot see it.’

“‘This levity is hardly suitable, sir, in your position; nor is it wise. You would not speak to the sheriff, I understand; and you were right; but your own safety requires that you should have no reserve with me.’

“‘Well, sir, I shall have no reserve. That paper (pointing to the indictment) is a bagful of lies.’

“‘Of course—I understand. You say you did not murder the man.’

“ ‘Not an inch of me.’

“ ‘But pray explain yourself fully, Mr Power: tell me all about the supper, and the quarrel, and what you did next day, and where you were the night before last; and whether you and this poor fellow met. It is needless to conceal things from me, otherwise I cannot serve you.’

“ ‘Well, Mr Stuart, but you can serve me, although I have nothing to tell you.’

“ ‘In what way?’

“ ‘By putting these two advertisements in the Irish and Glasgow newspapers,’ said the prisoner.

“ ‘The advertisements were as follows:—

“ ‘If ADMIRAL SEYMOUR recollects the young man to whom he described the volcanoes in the Fiji Islands on board the *Maid of Lorn* steamer, he will render him a most signal service if he will send his address to Mr JOHN STUART, W.S., Edinburgh.

“ ‘The other ran thus:—

“ ‘If the lady who was in the Belfast coach remembers the conversation about Moore’s *Melodies* a fortnight ago, she will send her address to JOHN STUART, W.S., Edinburgh.

“ ‘Witnesses—*alibi*—hem?’ The prisoner nodded assent.

“ ‘*Alibi*—rubbish! Try something else.’

"Power smiled. 'I have nothing else to try but the truth. I told you I did not murder him. If these advertisements are answered, you will subpoena the gentleman and lady for the trial, but will hold no communication of any kind with them. You will also subpoena the persons whose names and addresses are here,' handing him a paper, 'and hold no communication with them either. And I have no other instructions.'

"The solicitor shook his head, plainly believing the man to be mad. He left him, however, taking the advertisements along with him, in perplexity how to act, and instead of going home, went straight to the house of Mr C., the celebrated advocate in Charlotte Square, and to him he stated his troubles.

" 'And now, what would you advise me to do?'

" 'Do what the laddie bids you, John.'

" 'It is very irregular not to examine the witnesses.'

" 'You are little better than a coof, John. Do you not see that the *alibi* perhaps is a real one, and that the fellow wants them to prove it without notice? There is a story under all this, but your best plan is to do what he tells you. He has twice your brains, I'll warrant him.'

" 'Would you not step down and see him, Mr C.? He is a fine young fellow, and all the gentleman; and my mind misgives me he does not know his danger.'

“ ‘I never call on my clients, even in more fashionable residences.’

“ ‘But you might make an excuse, sir, to go and see him. I am sure your heart would warm to him at once.’

“ ‘So the kind-hearted and eccentric barrister promised to look in on the prisoner next afternoon.

“ ‘He found him sitting with the chairman and the vice of the supper-party, in a perfect torrent of merriment, little appropriate either to the circumstances or the place. The young men knew the distinguished counsel, and rose and became silent when he entered. Power, however, although he bowed courteously, did not seem to recognise his visitor’s name, even when it was announced.

“ ‘I have come to pay an afternoon visit to my friend here,’ said the barrister. ‘I am glad to find him with two such supporters—salvage men. But, my friends the savages, you had better withdraw. I wish to have your prey all to myself.’

“ ‘The two accordingly departed, and Mr C. was left alone with the prisoner.

“ ‘I suppose I should make an apology for my intrusion,’ said the lawyer; ‘but all the strange nooks of this city are familiar to me; and, laddie, I thought a friend in need might not be unwelcome.’

“ ‘In the homely kindness of his address, and the

Doric plainness of his speech, there was a dignity and elegance about the demeanour of the visitor that bespoke the well-bred gentleman. Power was at first startled, and then subdued by his manner.

“‘I am sure I am much beholden,’ he said. ‘ Might I ask to what I am indebted for this honour?’

“‘To your going to be hanged,’ said the other, bluntly.

“‘But there go two words to that,’ said Power. ‘They will not hang an innocent man in this blessed country of yours.’

“‘Won’t they though? They hanged Burke, after my friend the Dean had proved him to be a saint.’

“A pause ensued, for Power had little to reply to the flattering parallel.

“‘In plain words, my lad, I am sorry for you. There is a secret which you do not wish to disclose. I do not know who you are, or where you come from, but I am sure you are a stranger, and I believe that you are innocent. Friends are not so easily found by the stranger and the wrongfully accused, that you should reject an honest offer. Confide in me—I shall be secret as the grave.’

“Power looked at him for a minute, and then, a sudden revulsion seizing him, burst into a flood of tears.

“‘I am ashamed,’ he said, at last, ‘to give way

thus, but I am quite alone—how much you do not know—the most unfortunate of men, and in this, wholly innocent.’

“ ‘Tell me the tale plainly, my boy, and maybe I may find a remedy.’

“The prisoner told his tale. What it was the sequel must disclose.

“The day of trial had come. The prisoner was placed at the bar, the judges, in scarlet and white, defiled into court, and the clerk called, in a loud voice—

“ ‘Charles Power, stand up, and listen to the indictment against you.’

“The appearance of the prisoner excited great interest in court, which was crowded with students and the public. The Lord Advocate, as public prosecutor, sat on one side of the table within the bar, assisted by other counsel ; on the other side, sat Mr C. and a junior counsel.

“A strange smile came over the face of the prisoner when his name was called. He rose, however, with a glance at his counsel, and pleaded ‘Not guilty’ with a firm voice.

“The case made by the Crown authorities was one which startled the students by its strength and compactness. They called the students who were at

the 'Rainbow' to prove the quarrel. They proved that Power did not go to college on Monday the 25th of January; that Johnstone was seen to go up the common stair on the afternoon of that day; that persons who lived next door heard a violent altercation in Power's room about four o'clock; that the person who passed the policeman and gave the alarm was Power; and that Power left by the Glasgow coach at six o'clock, and returned to Edinburgh that night, remaining until Wednesday at an hotel. The medical men proved that the cause of death was concussion of the brain, accompanied by strangulation. In all instances the prisoner was distinctly and clearly identified. The notion of an *alibi* was apparently hopeless.

"Mr C. made but little attempt at cross-examination. He extracted some merriment out of an irascible stage-coachman, and succeeded in creating some confusion as to where and when Power left the Glasgow coach. But the proof of his return was quite clear.

"Of the doctors the counsel only asked a few questions.

"'You spoke about strangulation. How was it produced?'

"'I cannot tell.'

"'Pressure on the throat produces strangulation?'

“ ‘It does.’

“ ‘Any sort of pressure?’

“ ‘Any which is sufficiently close and tight.’

“ ‘Hanging produces strangulation?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Was this man hanged, doctor?’

“ ‘No; of course not.’

“ ‘Why “of course not”?’

“ ‘Because there is no reason to think he was.’

“ ‘Any other reason for “of course not”?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘You may go.’ And go he did, after saying more, and implying much more than he meant.

“The case looked very black, and was closed by the Crown reading the *notandum* made when Power refused to answer the sheriff’s questions.

“The audience were greatly excited, but the prisoner himself maintained a demeanour perfectly tranquil. He was rather moved when the witnesses described the grief of Johnstone’s family, but except at this stage of the trial he evinced no emotion whatever.

“ ‘Call Admiral Seymour,’ said Mr C.

“A tall weather-beaten man, somewhat stately, stepped into the witness-box, and was sworn.

“ ‘Admiral, do you know why you have been asked to come here?’

“‘No, sir, I do not ; and I think it would have been more civil to have told me. I know nothing about Mr Power, or any one of that name.’

“‘No one has had the civility to ask you what you were going to say ?’

“‘Yes ; a gentleman came from the Crown office ; I told him he knew as much as I did.’

“‘I believe you left Belfast by the steamer which sailed on the night of Sunday, the 24th of January ?’

“‘I did.’

“‘Do you recollect a conversation you had with a young gentleman about volcanoes ?’

“‘I remember it and him very well. He was a very intelligent fellow, and we walked together most of the night.’

“‘Were you fellow-travellers up the Clyde to Glasgow ?’

“‘We were.’

“‘When did you arrive in Glasgow ?’

“‘About one o’clock afternoon.’

“‘Where did you part from him ?’

“‘I took him to the Western Club, of which I am a member, and gave him lunch, and we parted there.’

“‘(To the prisoner.) ‘Stand up, if you please. Is that the man ?’

“‘It is.’

“ ‘Have you any doubt of that ?’

“ ‘None whatever.’

“ The Crown counsel rose to cross-examine.

“ ‘There must be some mistake, Admiral. Look at him again.’

“ ‘There is no mistake. That is the man. I should know him anywhere.’

“ ‘Did you see any one like him ?’

“ ‘Not that I remember. But since you are so pressing, I should like to hear him speak.’

“ The Judge said there could be no objection to that, and told the prisoner to address a remark to the witness.

“ ‘Ah, Admiral, do you recollect what happened to Dermot Rooney’s cow on her birthday ?’ said the prisoner.

“ The reminiscence was plainly a diverting one, for the Admiral laughed outright, and said it was the same funny fellow beyond all doubt. And, strange as it was, the jury seemed to think so too. And the Admiral was allowed to retire without further question.

“ ‘Call Miss Bridget Malone,’ said Mr C.

“ And a very pretty, ladylike young woman stepped into court, accompanied by her mother.

“ ‘You are the daughter of Mr Malone, the banker of Belfast ?’ said Mr C.

“ ‘Yes, I am.’

“ ‘Do you remember travelling to Belfast by the coach from Waterford on the 23d of January?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘You travelled inside?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘Had you any fellow-travellers?’

“ ‘Yes,’ said Miss Bridget, with a smile, ‘that gentleman,’ pointing to Power, ‘was with me.’

“ ‘All the way?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Was he agreeable?’

“ ‘Very pleasant, sir.’

“ ‘Have you ever seen or heard of him since?’

“ ‘No, sir. I saw an advertisement in the Belfast newspaper, which I knew must be from him; and so I am here to-day.’

“ ‘When did you arrive?’

“ ‘Only a few hours ago.’

“ ‘Did you know why you were wanted?’

“ ‘Not in the least.’

“ ‘You have no doubt it is he?’

“ ‘I have none,’ said the girl.

“ ‘Did he make love to you?’ interposed the opposite counsel.

“ ‘Oh—you mistake, altogether—we were very happy. That was all, and I was sorry when the journey was over.’

“ ‘And so was I,’ interposed the prisoner.

“ ‘Yes, that is his voice. If you make him say, “Oft in the stilly night,” my lord,’ said the girl, turning to the bench, ‘you would understand.’

“ ‘Shall I ask him to sing it?’ said Mr C.

“ ‘Really,’ said the Lord Advocate, ‘this is quite unusual and irregular.’ He was rather nettled with the evidence.

“ ‘No,’ said Mr C.; ‘it is a case of identity. Identity of voice may be as important as that of feature. Do you wish’ (turning to the witness) ‘to be confirmed in your opinion by hearing his voice?’

“ ‘I have no doubt about him; but he says it very sweetly.’

“ ‘Prisoner,’ said the Judge, ‘you have heard what has passed. Can you say any of the verses?’

“ Thus adjured, Power recited the second verse of that sweetest of all Moore’s melodies, with great taste and expression. The witness listened with delight, and at the end exclaimed—

“ ‘I was sure of it. Nobody ever said all “but *me* departed” but himself.’

“ He had said so, and the evidence was irresistible.

“ The waiter at the Western Club, the clerk at the coach-office, and the guard of the mail, all spoke to his having been in Glasgow on Monday until four

o'clock, and having left it by the coach that evening. He arrived in Edinburgh, as the Crown witnesses had said, at nine o'clock at night. The chain was complete, and all idea of concert was excluded by the fact that none of the witnesses knew when they came into the court the reason of their being summoned. The case looked like one of mistaken identity, but the strange thing was that the accused had never denied that he was the student in question, and seemed from the first to be familiar with all around him.

"The Crown had no choice but to abandon the prosecution, and the prisoner was acquitted ; but the mystery which the trial had thrown over the whole affair created an unpleasant impression, and he left Edinburgh next day.

"Very shortly afterwards a fact transpired which rendered it at least doubtful whether the crime had been committed at all. Two medical students, who were friends of Johnstone, resided at the top of the same staircase. Both of these students had left Edinburgh rather suddenly, immediately after this event, and it was not known where they had gone. But it transpired that they had been in the habit of making experiments in strangulation on themselves—not an unusual thing at that time ; and it came to be believed that Power's counsel at the time of the trial

had information that Johnstone came by his death in that way, and that the others in their terror had laid down his body at Power's door.

"The nine days' wonder soon subsided, and gave place to new topics; and it was many years afterwards that I heard the true version of this singular tale.

"It seems there were two brothers, twins, of the name of Power, who were left orphans, and almost without relatives or connections, when they were mere children. They were so wonderfully alike that those who knew them best could rarely distinguish them, and the old maternal grandfather who brought them up took care that they should be educated separately. Reginald the eldest assumed the name of Reynolds, as he succeeded to a small property through his mother. The brothers, after the death of their grandfather, being alone in the world, had the most devoted, even romantic, affection for each other, although at the time of this story they had not met for several years.

"Reginald had received a writership to India, and when the events I have spoken of occurred, was on his way to pay his brother a farewell visit. Johnstone and Power had met that afternoon, and Power had knocked him down, and was horrified an hour or two afterwards to find Johnstone lying dead at his door.

In his alarm he immediately started off by the coach which left for Glasgow at six o'clock, to meet his brother, and consult what was to be done. The coach stopped at a stage where it met the other, and there the brothers resolved on the romantic course of changing their identity, Power going to London as Reynolds, and Reynolds going to Edinburgh as Power. The rest is easily conceived, but Reynolds remained Power to the end of his life, and never would hear of resuming either his name or his estate. He went out as a medical man to Australia, rose to great eminence, and only died a year or two ago, leaving an enormous fortune. He left a widow whose maiden name was Bridget Malone."

The evening passed away merrily. Sophia and my hermit sung one or two duets very prettily. I had known his sweet although not powerful tenor in days gone by, and found what I suppose no one knew, that in his solitude he had not only cultivated it carefully, but had acquired considerable skill on the violin. It did me good to see him blush like a boy when he shyly proposed to add this contribution to our evening at home. The Doctor, however, growled at the concord of sweet sounds. He loved to hear his own voice as well as those of others, and was, moreover, as I afterwards discovered, a very

good judge of music, and the performances were not quite up to his mark. He promised, under cover of a louder *finale* than usual, to send me his views on the subject, and these I received a day or two afterwards. I give them accordingly in the state in which I received them.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DISCOURSE OF MUSIC.

“**I**F music be the food of love, play on.” But if music be the murderer of love, the bane of innocent flirtation, the exacting and wearisome tyrant of the evening, cease the eternal crash, stop that piano, and, oh ! warbler of the night, who knowest or reckonest not of the imprecations around thee, and vainly hopest that the circle hang enchanted on thy lips—shut up.

I think I like music ; I delight in Mozart and Beethoven ; I feel they speak to me, although what they say I do not know. But their cadences and phrases touch a chord which sensibly bounds within me, and sets in motion vague, dreamy, delicious thoughts, which tempt me almost to cry aloud with pleasure. I suppose, although I know little of the theory of musical composition, that there is as much musical skill displayed by these favourites of mine as by the loudest, harshest crash which Verdi ever inspired. But I hate Verdi and all the banging, braying school with an unmitigated hatred. Their

works seem to me to be composed of muscle only, without an animating spirit, an outrage on, and insult to, the real soul of music. Music should steal on you as the stalker steals on the deer. If you go beating drums, and shouting loud huzzas, your intended prey will be the other side the mountain before your work is well begun.

But even music I like is often distasteful to me. I resent—and everybody does resent—being told and compelled to listen—that is, being told to hold my tongue, when I wish to talk. It is all very well for you, hideous hypocrite of the drawing-room, knowing not one note of music from another, to stand with a foolish look, forcing your rebellious lips into the mockery of a rapturous smile. The counterfeited is written too plainly on your face, if any one took the trouble to look at it, or think of it. I, who am an honest man, hold my tongue, as I would in any other solemn assembly, but to pretend that I like being interrupted when my pretty neighbour is waxing sociable and pleasant, I should disdain.

I do, indeed, like pleasant melodies to pour into my ear while I talk or am talked to; and that is precisely what should happen on all such occasions, and what is never, on any account, permitted. And, my most amiable, but ah! too exacting hostess, why

is it that we may not carry on our innocent chat while your nightingales are singing? Shall I tell you? Conceit and vanity explain it all. It is sweet to sit on a bank on a summer's day, and listen to the chorus of the blackbird and the thrush; but would you enjoy them more if your own pretty prattle were silenced? A pleasant companion, in a pleasant stroll, is all the more agreeable, that the air is vocal all around. That is the music Nature has provided, and she never meant anything so preposterous as that man—still less woman—should be dumb during the performance. Nay, look at the feathered choristers themselves. They don't listen to each other, but swell their little throats, and pour out their musical small talk amid the harmonious discord all around. But, you—you care for nothing but having your phenomenon admired—because *you* brought her there, and *you* brought the people to hear her, and she will be sulky with *you* if the people talk, and your party won't be a success, and Mrs Crackenthorpe will come next day, and, scorpionlike, condole with you on the mortifications of the evening. Well, there are meaner motives in the world than those which swell your gentle and good-natured bosom. I quarrel not with them. I shall be as mute and as portentously unhappy as my friends; but say not that this kind of thing is the food of love.

The hostess on such occasions—for few men are such fiends as to promote actively such scenes of torture—never wastes a thought on her guests. Little she recks that her tall, slim, nervous friend, who stands woe-begone between the folding-doors, not disguising his misery, is as destitute of the sense of music as a blind man of the idea of colour. Why, then, is he there, a mockery of woe? Because he is Lord Charles, and his name will sound well to-night, and will look well to-morrow. She ought to have musical friends at her musical parties, so an old-world man of sense would think. But that is a vain thought. Some there are that really revel in the enjoyment of sweet sounds, and would be only too grateful for an evening such as this. But then the Grayling girls live on the wrong side of Oxford Street, and no one knows them; and although that which desolates Lord Charles would enchant them, the first is tormented and the last are snubbed.

Whatever our friend Dagentree may think of the Germans, he should sympathise with their passion for music. They love it: they live in it. You never see among them that gloomy, victimised type which stalks through London drawing-rooms. All are musicians. They listen when they wish to listen, and cease when they have listened enough. German

music is at least one thing real about them—it has real sentiment and real gaiety. Even I, an adopted son of British soil, solemn, and amusing myself sadly, believe that no good can come out of foreign parts, relaxed my Britannic *morgue*, and felt and looked human as I listened morning after morning to that angelic choir, the band at Homburg. Whether it still exists, or whether the desire for German unity has abolished German harmony, I do not know; for it is ten years since I flourished at that questionable watering-place. I rose at six, because other people did; and hated doing so. I drank the waters for no better reason, and hated them also. But how the band played, in those unreasonable, prejentacular hours—warbling forth from their absurd little tent the sweetest strains, and enjoying them to the full as much as their audience! And it was music again at twelve, and music again at five; and merrily the days of Thalaba went by. But, as I have mentioned Homburg, if it stands where and as it did, let me give a word of warning to all. It has nothing to do with music, but something with sweet sounds.

Opposite the Kursaal there is or was a semi-circular seat of stone, with a low parapet wall and a group of shrubs in the centre. Its diameter must be fifty feet, and when you sit at one end you cannot

see any one who may be at the other. It was rather a favourite resort of affectionate couples in those days, because, although close to the road, it had a sort of seclusion of its own. But one day I made, in regard to it, a discovery which somewhat alarmed me.

I was sitting in solitary state, *nescio quid meditans*—probably the vanity of human wishes and Homburg waters—when I heard a voice, close at my ear, say, “Don’t be silly, Charles.” Now my name is Charles; and thinking I was doing no mischief, I looked round and over the parapet for the airy whisperer, but in vain. It sounded as if the speaker was perched on my shoulder. Being convinced, however, that I was not the delinquent rebuked, I rose and walked round the shrubbery in the centre; and there, to be sure, I saw a young man who might be Charles, and a young lady who might have been the airy whisperer.

Of course I retreated, but next morning I took a friend down with me to the semicircular seat; I sat down at one end and he at the other, entirely out of sight of each other, and then we whispered below our breath to the wall, and every syllable was distinctly heard at the opposite extremity. Friends, countrymen, and, above all, lovers, it was a WHISPERING GALLERY.

Truth to tell, we are not a musical nation. The taste, as we have it, is an acquired taste for a foreign fruit. Yet I doubt greatly we are degenerate in that respect. What wonder that we do not understand music, who never learned it? How long shall it be that our youth shall go the round of Eton and Oxford, or Harrow and Cambridge, and learn nothing which will refine them socially? To have lessons in music at a public school, would be regarded as a degradation. That great refiner of our homes, that purifier of domestic hours, that sweet inward solace which bursts out in song, is not even regarded as a fitting thing for a boy to learn. In this, as I have said, we are degenerate. Plainly in Shakespeare's time, part-singing was an ordinary accomplishment, and prince and clown alike joined in the catch like "two gipsies on a horse." Sir Walter Scott, who always tried to preserve the characteristics of the period of which he writes, makes the king and the jester take up the parts of the roundelay, as they travel through the forest; and Erasmus, in his *Laus Stultitiæ*, mentions the love of music as one of the characteristics of Englishmen in his time. I hope the next generation will be less provincial and boorish than the present.

What is it that Shakespeare says about "it alone" being "high fantastical"? He is speaking of the

spirit of love, as he calls it; but the phrase is far more applicable to the spirit of music. As to the spirit of love, I know nothing of it. It is a mere phantasy for one of my years. The thick-rushing fancies, the raging of the soul, the jealous follies of that hour won't come. The flutter of the heart, the senseless disturbance of the brain, the long, abstracted, delicious reveries are unknown to my gray hairs. They are stored away with my bats and marbles. An old man doubtless may fall in love; and when he does, it is with a fury, an intensity akin to and equal to despair. But it is then—unhappy he who is the victim—a passion with a force and tenacity which youth seldom knows. Far, far from me be that wretched little divinity or demon. I have lived and loved, and luckily need no repetition, like a contented and respectable head of a family as I am. But the spirit of music never dies, and might, were I to yield to it, torment my old age with flames not less agitating than the other. Shakespeare, as usual, knew well what he wrote of, when he penned the lines I am thinking of. The strain that had a sound like the sweet south, suddenly sickened and died. It was not so sweet as it had been, and then he goes off into a rhapsody about the spirit of love. But the reason is plain enough. The duke had just dined. He felt uncomfortable, had a twinge of gout, or of toothache.

That which he took for the spirit of love was nothing but a terrestrial qualm ; and oh ! the agony of music when the body is ill at ease—a low and vulgar suggestion, but too germane to the ills which flesh is heir to.

But a mind ill at ease is worse. David must have touched his harp with the hand of a master to have charmed the dark hour from Saul. But the king threw his javelin at him, after all. What wonder ? The trouble of his mind had doubtless been goaded to frenzy by the very beauty and softness of the sounds. “I am never merry when I hear sweet music,” in another passage said our dramatist. No. He was softened, sentimental, and thought of his lost loves, wandered in dreams, his mother’s smile, ah ! so long ago, his boyish cares and joys, the desolate spot where the home of his forefathers stood, and so he was not merry. But I am savage when I hear sweet music, when I have quarrelled with my wife, or when my shares have gone down, or when my crops look badly. The fantastical sprite will not answer, and Mozart and Beethoven conjure in vain.

I speak of the domestic phase of music. No doubt, the lights of the world and demi-goddesses of fame inhabit a region far beyond my criticism. Yet the happiest hour I ever spent at the opera was during the second act of Faust, when the charming

Titians was a substantial Marguerite, and I was fast asleep. Nor think that I heard not the music. I heard it every note, but so sublimated and commingled with my dreams as to produce the perfection of enjoyment. But I have heard Rubini, and Tamburini, and Lablache; I have seen Taglioni and Duvernay; I have heard Malibran, and Pasta, and Grisi, when she was in the early dawn of her glorious power. I have heard Catalani sing "God save the King," and Braham sing "Sound an Alarm." But all I ever heard on the stage or off it, yields in my memory to the second night of Jenny Lind's first engagement in London.

The Swedish nightingale had made her *début*. It was successful, as it was certain to be, but it was felt to have been imperfect. Her nervousness had been so great that although her marvellous power developed itself in spite of her trembling, all felt that she had not yet done justice to herself. It was still in doubt whether a rival to Grisi had appeared.

So, having read the account in the *Times* of her first performance, I was resolved to attend the second; and having, by a most unreasonable amount of expenditure—how much I hardly remember—obtained a stall ticket, I thither hied on the eventful night.

The opera was *Robert le Diable*. When she appeared she was greeted with great heartiness, but not, as appeared to me, any great enthusiasm. There was a measured, critical cordiality in her reception which I thought struck chilly on her. But she was firm and brave, and though her voice quivered a little in the first verse of the opening air, she gave it with great sweetness and power—more so, I suspect, than on the former occasion, for it drew forth a hearty round of applause. This success, which, after all, was not excessive, seemed to fire her soul and banish all misgivings. I saw her eye sparkle, and her frame tremble, not with apprehension, but with resolute impatience. When the sound subsided she broke into the second verse with a burst of inspired power that carried herself and every one before it. Silent were the audience—silent as death, till the strain concluded. Men rose to their feet, and strained over the sides of the boxes and gallery to catch the bewitching and bewildering beauty of the fresh and unaccustomed tones. When the last notes ended there was one simultaneous long-drawn breath, and then such a concentric yell of cheering as, I believe, had never been heard within those walls before. If they had been cool at first, the audience passed at once to fever heat, and the great songstress went through the

rest of her performance as if it had been a triumphal procession. All present yielded to the magic of sympathy: and certainly no sounds I ever heard from human lips ever roused me to such a pitch of ecstasy as those which graced Jenny Lind's first triumph in England.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SUMMONS.

BEFORE our guests departed, Briggs the butler came up to me in a mysterious and confidential manner, and put a note into my hand. It was, to my surprise, from Mrs Carrington, and contained only a few words, asking me to ride over in the morning, as an unpleasant incident had occurred, on which she wished for my advice. I went down-stairs, and saw the groom, who said that a photographer had been there the day before, and had frightened his mistress, who was far from well in consequence. I wrote to say I should certainly be at Bonthron next day ; and returned to the drawing-room much wondering what could be the matter.

Our guests took their departure soon afterwards. Dagentree continued his attentions to the end, with a kind of reckless shyness ; and Sophia, who had shown herself a well-bred, sensible, unaffected girl, received his homage with simplicity, but certainly with pleasure.

"Good night, Mr Pemberton ; we have had a charming evening in the hermitage."

"Shall I tell your fortune, Miss Wendover?" said I.

"No. You are no conjurer. So, good night ; and do come and see us again before you go back to your sulky chambers."

"If I possibly can, and vanquish the curate."

They departed, and I, turning to Dagentree, said, in his own words, "Thank God, that is over."

"Ah," he said, "one evening is not like a fortnight."

"No, but one evening is the beginning of a fortnight, and something more, as I think this one is. But I am too much disturbed to sympathise in your access of levity." And I showed him Mrs Carrington's note.

"I suppose you mean to go?"

"Yes," I said ; "there is plainly no chance for me at Wendover."

"Good night," he said, with appalling gravity ; lighted his candle, and disappeared.

After breakfast, next morning, I rode over to Bonthron, as Mrs Carrington had asked me. I found, on my arrival, singular marks of disturbance on the part of the household. I was shown into a sombre sitting-room, the windows of which were almost wholly

obscured by the branches of a huge walnut-tree, and a considerable time elapsed before Mrs Carrington made her appearance.

When she arrived she looked even handsomer than she had done on the previous evening, but care-worn and harassed. She greeted me very pleasantly, and began at once on the subject on which she had sent for me.

"It is not easy for me to explain, Mr Pemberton, why I have asked for your help, rather than for that of a more experienced and older man."

I expressed my great satisfaction that it should be so. Not indeed without reason. Such a client might be the making of my fortune. She, womanlike, took it otherwise.

"Don't make fine speeches to me, or I shall think I am mistaken in you. But your conversation the other night made me hope you would be discreet and friendly; and I appeal to you, I tell you frankly, because I cannot help it."

I bowed, corrected, and waited. "To tell you the truth, Mr Pemberton, we are here in greater trouble than when I wrote to you last night. Our house has been broken into, and my title-deeds have been ransacked and tampered with. How much has been carried off I don't yet know. But the story is very inexplicable. The worst of it all is, that there is the

strongest reason to suspect that old Briggs, the butler at Dagentree, had something to do with it."

"Briggs! I cannot think that possible."

"Well, it does not sound probable, certainly. But still it seems he was seen to run across the hall, and clamber out by the window."

"Running and clambering are not exactly what I should have suspected Briggs of doing," I suggested.

"I do not know him. But my footman was startled about three in the morning by hearing a step in the room above him. He got up, and on opening the door which opens to the corridor, he saw a light from a room at the other end. The door creaked, and the light was instantly extinguished; but the footman, hurrying to the place, distinctly saw, in the moonlight, a figure, which he declares was that of Briggs, running across the hall. He knows him well, and is sure it was he. He instantly gave the alarm, and ran down-stairs in hopes of intercepting him, but he had disappeared."

"But was there not something about the photographer in the morning?"

"Yes. That is really the part of the matter about which I wished to speak with you. You remember the conversation we had on the subject of your photographic friend. Well, he came up here yesterday, and, to my extreme agitation and astonishment, I

recognised in his features a person I had known before, and under very unpleasant circumstances. He was not disguised. I think he meant me to recognise him, and he probably had come for the purpose."

Her voice faltered a little; and some strange misty suspicions began to creep over me, for I had seen this man in more than one singular aspect in the course of this eventful week, and in every instance under circumstances rather unusual.

"It is very painful, Mr Pemberton," she said; "but I am a woman, and alone, with a secret which poisons my life, and threatens my boy. I must have some one to tell it to; because only so can I escape from it, and you, I believe, will at least be trustworthy. You know, I suppose, that my husband is dead. Carrington, however, was not my married name. My husband's name was Trench, and he died more than two years ago in America."

I sat like one stupefied; for this was the name of the fair vision at Amiens, and this was the name I had seen on the letter which the artist showed me.

"A very strange coincidence!" I muttered, half-unconsciously.

"What is the coincidence, Mr Pemberton? Your looks agitate me."

"I beg pardon. But I lately heard the name in

connection with a very sad story, of which my friend Dagentree knew something. I did not mean to interrupt you."

"Tell me, is there any gossip in the neighbourhood about me?" she said, excitedly.

"None whatever, as far as I know, Mrs Carrington. My friend's tale was four years old, and related to an adventure which befell him at Amiens, which had a very tragical end. He told me the incident three days ago. But the only persons concerned perished at sea."

"Was it about the wife of an engineer, and a little boy, who travelled from Amiens to London?"

I simply stared at her; too much confounded to speak.

"If so, I was the unhappy subject of it. But how could Mr Dagentree know anything of that incident?"

"Mrs Carrington, Dagentree was the man who hired the special train for you, and took care of your boy."

She gasped for breath. "Mr Pemberton, I never knew that kind man's name. Either I never heard it, or, in my agitation and misery, had forgotten it; but for four weary years I have remembered him in my prayers night and day."

"It is, as you say, a strange coincidence," she continued; "but if he told you my history, as I told it to

him, I am relieved of speaking of much that is painful to me. The rest of what I had to say may be shortly told.

“I need not dwell on my escape from the shipwreck. We struck on a reef on the south-west coast of Ireland ; but I was destined to find help and a friend even in that dreadful scene. A bright-eyed college lad, not more than nineteen, sacrificed his young life to save mine. He lashed me and my poor little boy to a hen-coop, to give us a chance of escape, just before the ship went down. He could have saved himself, if he would have deserted us ; and the last thing of which I am conscious is the sensation of being in the water, and seeing his steadfast brave eyes fixed on us from over the dark hull’s side, as the vessel gave a lurch and disappeared. I shudder to think of it ; and all the rest is confusion. A boat, it seems, manned by some Irish fishermen, picked us up ; how long afterwards I have no idea, for I was insensible then, and for many hours. When I recovered, I found myself in an Irish farm-house, with a kindly face bending over me ; and with the worthy couple who had taken me and my boy in, I resided for many months. I was utterly penniless. Although I wrote to Liverpool, I heard nothing in reply ; and my host and hostess would not hear of my leaving them. Little Harry somehow had got

round the woman's heart, for she had lost her only boy ; and she would fain have had us stay even after I had the means to reward them and depart.

" At last a letter and a remittance from the Liverpool agent reached me. From some confusion at the post-office, my letters had miscarried ; and when I did hear, it was more than four months since I and my boy had been reported to have been lost. The agent sent me money to pay my journey to Dublin, and came over to meet me there.

" As I expected to find, the news of my supposed death had been forwarded to my husband ; but no answer had been received from him. I therefore resolved to go in search of him ; and undeterred by the terrors of the former voyage, I again set sail for America, assuring my friendly Liverpool agent that unless I found my husband, I should apply to my own relatives to reimburse him for the money he advanced.

" I arrived safely in New York, but found that my husband had left it some months before. I need not detain you now with the story of my wanderings in search of him. They would have been romantic had they not been unutterably sad. I was obliged to leave Harry at New York, and after travelling for many weeks I at last found the object of my search in the wilds of Minnesota, and found him on his death-bed."

Here Mrs Carrington gave way altogether, and burst into a convulsion of tears.

"I do not know," she resumed, "whether his death was hastened by my arrival or not. I rather fear it was. Some day or other I will tell you the story at full. But the sad, sad death-bed, the weary, hopeless watch, and the final misery, were not all I had to suffer. I found out then the real cause of our distresses. Henry had been married before, and had reason to fear his wife was still alive.

"In the disjointed and painful words which alone he was able to speak I gleaned these facts. He had been employed, three years before we met, on some works in the Southern States of America, and had there fallen in love with and married a creole girl of great beauty. She proved to be worthless, and left him; and as he had the best ground to believe, died within a year of their marriage. This girl had a brother, a dissipated fellow, who truly or untruly, as I believe, gave my Henry the information, while he was at Amiens, that his first wife, as I must call her, was alive. Of course, his object was to extort money; and he came to France for that purpose. Henry did not believe him, and at last started off to America to verify the truth of the tale. It proved to be so far true, that a woman of the same appearance, resembling his first wife, and calling herself by his name,

had been seen at various places. He had spent nearly a year in trying to confront her ; but had failed, owing, no doubt, to the resolution taken that they should not meet. And he died with this dreadful doubt at his heart.

"My poor Henry was buried ; and I returned, utterly stunned and bewildered with accumulated sorrows, to New York. I found my husband had placed some funds in the hands of his agent there, as well as a will, leaving to me, both in my married and maiden name, all that he possessed. I remained in New York until Mr Rendelson found me there, and announced my accession to Bonthron. But before I departed, I was one morning startled by an unwelcome visitor, the ill-conditioned brother I have mentioned. He threatened and bullied about his sister, told me she was still alive, and demanded money for his silence. I referred him to Mr Rendelson, but have had annoying letters from him, from time to time, until he appeared yesterday. He is the photographer. Yesterday he said nothing, but I am convinced he means to do more mischief."

I was utterly overwhelmed with this startling communication. To think of Dagentree's lost love rising out of the waves in this way, and under such circumstances, was exciting enough. To see a long and intricate lawsuit in prospect, Mrs Carrington the

client, and Mr Pemberton her counsel, was a very cheering event. But—the bitter in the cup. What of that ride by midnight, and Dagentree's claim on that widowed heart? Alas, poor Sophia!

These were the thoughts which rushed through my mind, as she told me her eventful tale. When she finished, with much real feeling in my heart and in my voice, I inquired what Mr Rendelson thought of the matter.

She coloured and looked embarrassed. "It is needless," she said, "to have half confidences. Mr Rendelson thought the owner of Bonthron might perhaps share it with him. I declined, for although I rather liked the man, I hardly trusted him. He has taken it mortally amiss, and although we are still ostensibly friends, I know he hates me, and he is a man who, when he hates, will injure. Now, what do you advise?"

"I can hardly say; your statement is so completely unexpected, and so strange. Remarkable as it may appear, I believe I am in possession of one or two facts which may turn out to be important to you. Of one thing I am quite clear. You must have the whole affair probed to the bottom. Painful as it may be, the truth or falsehood of that tale must be ascertained."

"I agree with you. You may easily understand

my natural shrinking from such an investigation. But I am now quite prepared for it. For myself, whatever the truth, I have steeled myself to bear it. I am aided in this, perhaps, by a strong conviction that the tale was false from the first. Will you undertake to help me?"

I was on the point of accepting this charge with an effusion somewhat too warm for a lawyer. I was restrained by a memory, not of my wig and gown, but of that detestable special train. Still I professed myself ready to undertake that service; and, I am afraid I said, any other which she thought fit to impose.

"But what is to be said about the burglary, Mrs Carrington? Who could have a motive for that?"

"I own I am puzzled to imagine. Besides, the evidence to Briggs having been the perpetrator, or connected with the act, seems conclusive, I am sorry to say."

I thought otherwise, for reasons of my own.

"I suppose the police have been here?"

"Yes—but of course I have said nothing to them about that man. I told them about Briggs; and I suppose he is in custody by this time."

"Then I fear I must hurry back. But I accept your commission gratefully, and all that energy and sympathy can do, shall be done."

“ I feel sure of that,” she said. And there was a little tremor in her voice, and a little pressure from her hand, that drove the special train out of my head, for a moment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WINDING UP.

AS I rode home, my brain was in a whirl with the events of the morning. Mrs Carrington's identity with the disconsolate myth of Amiens I could not get over, and her escape from the shipwreck was almost too startling to be credible. Nor let me be accused of unfeeling levity. It is true I did not mourn over the departed Trench; and although I was sorry that Mrs Carrington did not know whether she had been married or not, I rejoiced that it had been reserved for Eustace Pemberton to solve that great mystery. So, for a little while the husband, the widow, the shipwreck, the Yankee, and Briggs, danced a confused measure through my thoughts, until my horse, by knuckling over a loose stone and nearly falling, recalled my scattered senses.

I came to the conclusion that there was a deep plot, in the hands of experienced agents. Reflecting over the disjointed incidents of the week, I felt sure

that the photographer had been in the neighbourhood for no good purpose. That Briggs had anything to do with the burglary I did not imagine for a moment, although at first I was puzzled and perplexed by the positive statements of the Bonthron servants. Before, however, I had ridden a couple of miles, I had formed a tolerably connected theory on the subject, and had resolved on the line of action I should adopt.

As to Mrs Carrington's story, I was compelled to admit to myself that it might be true—as likely, perhaps, to be true as to be false—that Trench's first wife was alive, or had been so at the date of the second marriage. If so, it was a sad fate for her and her boy. But then, if Eustace Pemberton proved the falsehood of the tale—?

I was framing a very glowing result, when, jogging round a corner, came a hired fly, with a constable on the box beside the driver, and another inside, along with the unlucky burglar, Briggs. Loud did the culprit shout to me, and the fly stopped.

Certainly; if extreme agitation could be held a proof of guilt, Briggs was undeniably guilty. He was white, vociferous, and terrified; and could hardly articulate, from fright.

“Lord, save us, sir! Lord, have mercy upon us! Mr Pemberton—oh, sir, save me! I be innocent as a

babe, sir! I was in bed, sir, the whole night. Don't let them hang an innocent butler."

Such and such like were Briggs's adjurations. I tried to compose him; assured him I should see him in the evening; and gave him strong advice not to say a single word in answer to any question. I did this, not only because it is always best for a guilty man to be silent, but because even an innocent man has often suffered from ill-timed loquacity; and I relied firmly on Briggs, guilty or innocent, telling a dozen lies in as many minutes, out of pure trepidation.

"Don't be afraid, Briggs," said I. "Stand up to them like a man, and say you are innocent, if you are innocent. But don't say a word more till I come to help you. Hold your tongue, and hear all the others have to say."

"Thank 'ee, sir," said Briggs, with doleful humility. "But who would have thought on their taking an innocent butler? That's the hardest part on't—an innocent butler."

I renewed my injunctions as to silence, notwithstanding that the scowling constable muttered, "Silence be blowed; let the cove patter, an' he will. It's a ten years' job, anyhow,"—and after promising to see Briggs righted, rode on my way.

It was plain that my visit to my discontented cousin, which began so tranquilly, must come to a

rapid termination in the thunder and lightning of this melodrama in which it had involved me. In the view which I took of the situation, instant and rapid action was necessary. I therefore resolved, after making some inquiries at Dagentree, to go off to London, engage a solicitor, and return next morning to attend the examination of Briggs. But what of Dagentree? How would he receive the budget of wonders I had in store for him? I was not permitted, even to him, to disclose the widow's perplexities. But I could not avoid telling him who she was. And then, was she not his only love? Can a man travel in a special train with a fascinating widow, and forget, and hope to be forgiven? No doubt there was Sophia, but he had only just made her acquaintance. But so had I that of the widow, and was I not vowing to lay myself, my heart, my wonderful intellect, my golden professional prospects, my all, at her little feet? No. I would not stand in his way. I would go off to London this very night, which, as I could not avoid doing it at any rate, I forthwith magnanimously resolved to do.

When I arrived at Dagentree, bereft of Briggs, I found my sneering cynic in a state of good hearty rage. The arrest of *his* butler on such a charge was an outrage. Was it for this that he had lived in his harmless retirement? To have his name handed

about in police courts, and his old honest servant made a standing joke and reproach, was insufferable. He was pacing up and down on one of the terraces, only awaiting my arrival to go off and see the fate of the injured and heart-broken butler.

He was very indignant with me because I insisted on knowing what evidence there was of his having been in the house the night before. Unfortunately there was none. Briggs would admit "no brother near the throne." His dormitory was close to an outer door, and he could go in and out without any one knowing, for no one slept in the vicinity. Indeed the testimony of the other servants was against him in that particular, for he certainly had been out early that morning, and his dusty boots were in his room.

There was the great photograph, which he had only received the day before, hanging over the chimney-piece. I looked at the portrait, and thought of the emptiness of human greatness. There he was, haughty and imperious, and now, he had dwindled down to a querulous and terrified mortal, as Cæsar had when he asked Titinius for some drink. I gazed, I moralised, and I examined.

"Do leave that stupid thing, Pemberton, and come and consult with me as to what is to be done."

"In a minute. Will you tell the footman to come here?"

"What good can he do?"

"Ask him to come, please."

So the second in command came, wondering whether he, too, had been guilty of unconscious burglary.

"Are these Mr Briggs's boots?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did he wear them last?"

"This morning, sir. I saw him take them off about six."

"What other boots or shoes has he?"

"I can show you, sir." And straightway he led me to a recess where Briggs kept his wardrobe. I saw, and was satisfied after two or three more questions. Thereafter I joined Dagentree on the terrace.

"Now, Pemberton," he said, "don't look so like an Old Bailey lawyer, and do assume the amount of reason you have been furnished with. What is this affair about Briggs, and what right has that woman at Bonthron to make accusations against my household? And why do you stand sniggering there, as if you were in the plot?"

"I think Briggs's affair is very serious," I said, "for the servant at Bonthron swears he saw him: and the gamekeeper entirely corroborates him."

"Pooh! they could not see the man when he was not there."

"But that is the real question. Was he there?"

"There you go, like a lawyer again, putting questions. Can't you take a practical view of it?"

"I fear the practical view is the lawyer's view. If Briggs comes to be hanged, as he fully expects, that would be both a lawyer's view and a practical view."

"Do be rational! What did the woman say against Briggs?"

"I shall make you speak with more respect of the woman before long."

"Of course, you are her champion, and with your head muddled with vanity, have no thoughts to throw away on poor Briggs and myself."

"Well, since you treat me thus, it is fortunate that I must leave you to-night."

"To-night!" he exclaimed. "You cannot be serious, Pemberton, when we are all in such distress."

"I am quite serious. I have made my arrangements to go by the six o'clock train."

"Well, as you please. I could not have believed it possible; but your departure shall be aided, as far as I can assist you."

He seemed so much hurt that I dropped my bantering and my pretended sulks, and said to him kindly—

"I must go, my dear fellow, to see about Briggs's affairs. I shall be back to-morrow. But I have

something serious to tell you about that woman, as you choose to call her."

"I am in no humour for confidences. For the present I can only think of my own affairs, and as you seem so full of your own, I shall go off to Wendover."

"As you please. Don't let me detain you," said I, resolved to keep up the mystery a little longer, knowing that all would come right in the end. "But if you are going now, I wish you would take a note from me to the chief constable, which may be of use to poor Briggs. I shall go off to London at once, and come down to-morrow morning for the examination. I hope you will be in a better humour by that time. Wendover air may agree with you."

Dagentree tried to look annoyed, but I saw a furtive wreath of satisfaction round his mouth. What my note to the chief constable contained, what I did in London, and the result of my consultations there, need not be set down here. Suffice it to say, that ten o'clock next day found me at the county town, where, before a full bench of magistrates, Briggs's fate was to be decided.

Pale and tremulous, the culprit was brought into court; when he glanced at me he seemed reassured, and leaning over the dock, he said, "Didn't tell them nothing, sir," in a very audible stage whisper.

I almost laughed at the poor fellow's simplicity; but one or two of the magistrates who overheard the words, looked suspiciously at the prisoner and his counsel. Rendelson, who was on the bench, whispered something to his brother magistrates, which seemed to reassure them; but which sounded to me like "very young."

The inquiry of course commenced by the proof of the burglary. The footman was examined, and gave evidence to the effect I have already mentioned. He knew Briggs quite well, and had not the slightest doubt it was he whom he had seen.

I asked him, "How was he dressed?"

"In his usual suit of black. He had shoes, and white cotton stockings."

"You are sure of the stockings and shoes?" I asked, with the Westminster Hall sneer.

Thomas took me seriously, and answered—

"Yes, sir; quite sure. Saw them plainly as he got out of window."

The magistrates looked at each other, and smiled, as though the lawyer had the worst of it. And I looked discomfited.

The gamekeeper was the next witness, and spoke to having seen Briggs run across the lawn. He described him exactly in the same way. He saw him

distinctly in the moonlight, and gave chase, but lost him among the bushes.

"You know Mr Briggs well?"

"Very well indeed, sir. We was great friends."

"Was he a well-behaved man?"

"A very proper-spoken man, as always knowed his place, and never suffered chaff."

"Did you ever know him get out by a window?"

"Can't say I ever did," said he, with a smile.

"Did you ever know him run in your life?"

"No, sir. To tell ye the truth, sir, when I seed him on the lawn, going like a maukin, I could not believe my eyes. But he is the man."

Then Mrs Carrington was called, and a great sensation was created in the audience.

She was dressed simply but becomingly in her widow's weeds; and as she stepped forward, cast a glance round her, and at last encountered the eyes of Dagentree, who was sitting behind the magistrates, but who gazed at her without the least sign of recognition. She smiled and looked gratified at seeing him, but betrayed no emotion, and turning round, gave me a very gracious nod.

All she had to say was that her title-deeds had been ransacked. She could not say what she had lost, but some certainly had been taken.

I asked her no questions.

The last witness was a man who spoke to meeting a man and a woman about four in the morning on the road between Bonthron and Dagentree, the man's dress corresponding to that described by the other witnesses. He spoke also specially to the shoes and stockings, and to his wonder at seeing a man so dressed at that time in the morning.

Here the case closed: and the presiding magistrate, addressing me, said,—

“The case is quite clear, Mr Pemberton. It must go to the assizes.”

“I think not, Mr Wendover. I have a witness or two who will put a different complexion on this affair.”

I called Nicholas Stout, a worthy cobbler in a village close to Dagentree.

“Have you a pair of shoes in your pocket, Nicholas?”

“Ees, sir,” said he; and he pulled out a pair.

“Whose shoes are these?”

“They be Muster Briggs's shoes.”

“When did you get them?”

“I gits them o' Thursday mornin', sir, fro' Muster Jenkins, that's him as is the footman.”

“What hour on Thursday?”

“Gone eight, a bit.”

“What was to be done to them?”

“There was them two holes to be stitched,” pointing out two tears close to the shoe-strings.

"You have had them ever since?"

"Ees, sir. Muster Briggs, he wanted them done afore Sunday come round, for he had not no others."

The footman at Dagentree, Jenkins, proved that Briggs had given him the shoes to take to the cobbler on Thursday morning; and that he wore boots all that day and Friday. He had no other pair of shoes.

"This is but a small affair about the shoes, Mr Pemberton. Is it worth your while to pursue it?"

"One question more. Have you brought a photograph with you?"

"I have."

"When was that taken?"

"On Wednesday afternoon."

"By whom?"

"By a Yankee artist chap."

"Should you know him again?"

"I should, sir."

"Bring in that man."

The constable brought in a man who proved to be my mysterious friend.

"That is the man?"

"That's him, sir."

"That closes my evidence for the present. If the bench will look at that photograph, they will, I think, obtain a clue to this case. The burglar, whoever he

was, was dressed after it to represent the prisoner, and the ingenuity of the device has betrayed itself and its perpetrator. Briggs could not have had shoes and white stockings on on Friday morning, because his shoes were in the possession of the cobbler. If the bench examine that photograph through a magnifier, they will see on the shoes the very rents which the cobbler had to mend."

I had a magnifier at hand, and of course all the magistrates had a peep through it. There was no denying it: the rents were there.

"I have, however, to apply for a warrant against Silas Sainscroft, by whom the photograph was taken, for committing this burglary, personating Briggs, and purloining certain title-deeds from Mrs Carrington."

For reasons sufficient to me, I had my eye on Rendelson throughout the whole of this scene. From the time when Sainscroft was introduced, he had been very uneasy; and when I made this proposal he restrained himself from breaking out by a great effort. But he said quietly, "Rather rash, I think, Mr Pemberton. The theory is ingenious, but an *alibi* resting on a photograph and a microscope is not much to be relied on."

He said this with his usual sneer, and the bench smiled in unison.

"I beg pardon, Mr Rendelson, my charge against

Sainscroft rests on very sufficient testimony. Meanwhile I make it ; and if the bench, on the information I can give them in private, will grant the warrant, I shall undertake by Monday to establish it."

"What evidence have you, pray?"

"My own ; but I am unwilling, for many reasons, to give it."

"What may your reasons be?"

"Because I might implicate others," I said, significantly. "Let this stand till Monday, and the case shall be made clear."

"Well," said Rendelson, changing his tone, "your notion does you credit. I think we may admit Briggs to bail, and send the case to the assizes ; and remand Sainscroft in the meantime until Monday."

I understood this turn of affairs ; and the bench, who did not understand it, at once acquiesced in the suggestion of their oracle. Dagentree, of course, became bail for Briggs ; and the liberated butler, after one groan of relief, instantly reassumed the overbearing carriage he had laid aside in his adversity.

"Low cattle, them painting chaps," he said.

"Why, Briggs," said I, "I thought you were very proud of your picture."

He disdained to reply.

Scarcely had Briggs been dismissed when Dagentree came down from the bench.

"I forgive you, Pemberton, and you must forgive me. You are certainly the best of fellows, and I do believe you have an atom of sense. It was hardly fair to keep me in the dark, and allow me to exhibit myself in the part of an exasperated tiger. But who on earth is Mrs Carrington?"

"The woman at Bonthron," said I.

"She is so like my fellow-traveller from Amiens, that if the sea could give up its dead, I could have sworn it was she."

"She must tell you herself." So I led him up to where Mrs Carrington was sitting.

She rose, and took him by both hands, and looked up kindly into his eyes.

"I am glad we meet again, Mr Dagentree; though many painful years have passed since we parted. This is no place for explanations, but I have long wished to let you know how gratefully I remember your kindness. Had I known your name, I should not have waited until now. Will you come back with me to Bonthron, with Mr Pemberton, and dine there?"

She was simple, earnest, and very warm in her manner, but without a tinge of consciousness or sentiment. Dagentree, meanwhile, presented an aspect of bewilderment, hesitation, and pleasure, mingled with embarrassment, which was amusing, and not

displeasing to me. He bowed and smiled very graciously to the invitation ; thanked her for recollecting any little service he might have been able to render—but—and then he stammered, and at last owned that he was sorry that he was engaged to dine at Wendo-ver, and—— Here the sentence died away in in-articulate sound.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STILL WINDING UP.

I DINED with Mrs Carrington at Bonthron, but as one or two strangers were there, had no further conversation with her worth recording, and returned home late. I was very proud of having restored the innocent and injured Briggs to his throne. He had not, I grieve to say, shown in this crisis of his fortunes that inbred philosophy which, we are told, is

“Gall and wormwood to an enemy;”

but he fully sustained the character of a restored monarch, in having learned and forgotten nothing. Indeed, it was remarked, that, from this time forward, his dignity was more unapproachable, and his authority more supreme than ever.

I was roused next morning by a loud and imperious knocking at my door. I was in that charming state of guilty slumber which overtakes the wretch who refuses to get up when he is called. Why it should be so much more pleasant to sleep when one ought to be awake, than at orthodox times and seasons, it were hard to say. I do not, of course, sleep in church;

but there have been times when I would have paid a considerable ransom to do so. I suppose the charm lies in the incongruity and unfitness of the thing. The reason the undergraduate vows that he won't go home till morning, is that he ought to go home before morning. If he were prohibited from going home till daylight does appear, the spell would be entirely destroyed, and he would feel like a victim instead of a hero. Whatever the cause, I was in the most luxurious state of placid and intense happiness when that autocratic summons startled me. My windows were wide open. The fresh breeze fanned my face, bringing with it all the fragrance of the flowers outside. My dreams were the colour of the roses which nodded at the casement, and

“Thrice ere he woke me I dreamed it again.”

“Master be a-waiting, sir. Past ten o'clock. Breakfast as cold as a stone.”

“What, Briggs? I am ashamed of myself. I shall be down presently. But I am glad to see you looking so well. I hope yesterday's work did not disagree with you?”

“Rum start that, sir. But Lord, how clean you bowled them—right through their stumps the first ball. I never seed nothin' like it, sir. To think o' them takin' in an innocent butler. Did you hear, sir, o' the painting chap?”

"No, Briggs; what of him?"

"Off, as clean as a whistle, and the bobbies as mad as hatters. They can't hear on him nowhere; and Mr Rendelson, they do say, is raging about it."

"Perhaps not so very furious, either," thought I, greatly annoyed. "How did he escape?"

"None on them can tell, sir. The bobbies, you know, sir, are very decent fellows, though they were a frifle rude yesterday. But when a bobby is told that a butler is a thief, it's along o' his duty, and all that. It's a bad life, sir, is a bobby's. It destroys the finer feelings, to be always a-suspecting of his neighbours. But there is nothing like a drop of sound ale to bring their hearts back to the right places; and the bobbies and I were the best of friends when we parted."

"But the painting chap?—what of him?"

"Well, you see, sir, I don't want to get the bobbies into a mess, and you won't peach?"

"I do not know that, Briggs. I must be told how it happened."

"Not by me, sir," answered Briggs, stoutly. "The men are bobbies; but for all that, I would not harm them. They have few friends."

This compassionate view of the condition of the police force had never occurred to me before; but there was some reason in it; and so I promised the

innocent butler to make no injurious use of his information.

"Well, sir, after we went away from court, I was a-walking down the street, and I comes up to the two bobbies, and that painting chap between them. I thought to see him melancholy like, as a man should be in such company ; but blowed, if he was not spinning a yarn as jolly as a donkey on Sunday, and the bobbies laughing like to split. It was on-decent, said I to the bobbies, for I would not demean myself to address him.

" 'Your servant Mr Briggs,' said one of the bobbies. 'Hope you don't bear malice;' for I was looking a kind of stern. 'We were sorry for you; but it was in the way of duty.'

" 'And I am sorry for you,' said I ; 'but if a pot of beer will make it up, I 'll stand it.'

" 'No objection whatsoever,' says he; and then he turns to his pal, and says he ; 'Wot shall we do with this varmint?' a whispering behind his back, for he was handcuffed to one of them.

" 'Never mind me, old coons,' says he, quite cheerful like ; 'I 'll sit and see you drink it as mum as snakes. Hope it may be as good as what you gave me, Briggs,' says his sauciness ; and he winked at me, like a low fellow as he was.

"Well, we goes into the public, and I stood them

a pot of beer. We did not stay long ; but we got a-talking ; and at last, when we thought o' going, and looked for the painter chap, he had mizzled."

"What did he do?" said I, for I did not catch the expression.

"Mizzled, sir," he repeated mysteriously, "Mizzled!"

"But how did he mizzle, as you call it, out of his handcuffs?"

"That's what beats me, sir."

"What do you mean, Briggs."

"As I was saying, that's what beats me—the very thing I said to the bobbies." With that Briggs winked in his turn, and shut the door.

I was greatly provoked with this incident, and descended to breakfast with my dreams rudely disturbed. I found Dagentree in great spirits, and he rallied me unmercifully on my laziness—evidently to keep off more delicate ground.

"Upon my word, Pemberton, you managed that affair very cleverly. But why can a lawyer never do anything like other people? Why did you keep up all that mystery about——"

"That woman at Bonthron? As you know, I had no right to gossip about her; and, besides, I might have other reasons. But I would not have missed your face in court when the widow appeared for a term's fees."

"A lordly gage, in truth! But I was, as you may suppose, greatly astonished, although the fair vision which I confessed to you the other night seems to have departed on the wings of time!"

" 'One foot on sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never!'

So it was but a scratch, after all; and that invulnerable heart is as sound and as hard as ever."

Dagentree coloured: but merely said "Who knows? What strange things likings and dislikings, loves and hatreds, are. There was some truth in the Rosicrucian theory. I think we are managed by some malicious spirits, who weave webs of folly in our brain, or our heart, and then break them in pure wantonness, just when we think they are going to catch something—some gaudy fly, or painted butterfly. But if all the world were constant, how dull it would be! If every girl of fifteen, or every boy of eighteen, were to insist in being constant to their first love, misery! what intolerable bores they would become? Not that they don't do pretty well as it is in that direction."

"Doubtless there is a fate which watches over such matters. There is no natural selection in it, or any rule of progression. The fittest are not the survivors in any Darwinian sense. You see your good, strong, healthy love, with everything suitable, go out like

a rushlight, while a wretched, puling, impossible thing, that never could, should, or would be, burns like a furnace to the hopeless end.—Had you a pleasant evening at Wendover?"

"I was very happy, Pemberton," said my friend, consciously.

"I am very glad," said I; and I grasped his hand warmly. Like true Englishmen we spoke not a word of congratulation; we shook hands—that was all—but like Lord Burleigh's shake of his head, there was a world of meaning it. Was there not lurking in my heart a conscious pleasure in the removal of a rival? Well; I think not. I think if it had been the widow, my grasp would have been still firmer, and not less sincere: but as Dagentree innocently said, I was very happy.

Dagentree had been so absorbed in this new-found Wendover romance, that I doubt if he had at all realised the extent of my admiration for his ancient love. When a man like my hermit really takes to making open love, it engrosses his whole thoughts. The sensation is so new, that as he thinks of nothing else himself, he believes all the world to be equally absorbed, not from egotism, but simply from complete demoniacal possession. So, for the present, the only question in his brain requiring solution was not what I felt for Mrs Carrington, but

what he felt : and having solved that entirely to his own satisfaction, the thought of her troubled him no more.

"Dagentree, my furlough has expired, and this is my last day. I have crowded enough into my visit to fill a three volume novel : but now, I must 'back to busy life again.'"

"No doubt your existence in Pump Court fully merits your description of it. But I know your obstinacy of old ; and as you must go, it is in vain for me to ask you to stay, or to say how happy I have been with you, or how sorry to lose you. So we must try to spend our day pleasantly. I think we may ride up to Dashwood to lunch, and then we may send our horses back and wander through his Grace of Glamorganshire's woods, which you have not seen, and are worth seeing."

"I think I must see Rendelson about the escape of this scoundrel first."

"I don't think you need take that trouble, Pember-ton. I have seen Rendelson to-day, while you were roosting ; and everything possible has been done. Besides, I do not think you stand high in that gentleman's favour, and I doubt if he is anxious to take you into counsel."

"He probably has good reasons for his antipathy ; and perhaps, were I to guess, I might hazard a conjecture not far from the truth. But, as you think he

has no desire to see me, I shall not intrude, but shall make my own inquiries."

The weather still smiled on us when we started on our ride. Bright sun—western breeze. Round, well-conditioned, shadowy clouds, not streaky, erratic, cross-purpose looking things; nor sharp, white, angular pillars; nor gray, unbroken walls of mist; but good, honest, well-poised clouds, hung high in the air, and floating in serene dignity. Balmy odours from the fields; and "sweet was the song which the corn-reapers sung." The scene would have raised the spirits of a misanthrope.

Being in love, especially in happy and successful love, is like being in wine or in whisky; it affects men very differently. Sometimes it makes a man surly; he hugs his secret joy, and growls over it like a dog over a bone. Sometimes it makes him sweet and silent, placing a silly simper on resolute lips, and a melancholy cadence on manly accents. Sometimes the man is frivolous; sometimes he is horribly earnest. One will cease to care for his most cherished pursuits, or for his best friend. Another will be troublesomely anxious to promote the welfare of everybody, especially of people he never cared a pin for. But it was certainly good for my hermit. He was not less witty or wise, but there was a touch less of vinegar in the salad. It disclosed what was really the matter

with him before, the want of being appreciated—the last deficiency which he would have acknowledged, or the last probably of which he was conscious. But more of the misanthropy of the world comes from that source than its victims are aware of. A clever shy man won't let the world see what he is, and then quarrels with the world because it does not see it. But when a bright particular star thinks him worthy of being shone upon, the void is filled, the self-love is appeased, the sense of injustice is removed. So it was with Dagentree. There was a sunny joyousness over our ride on that last day which warmed my heart, and which I shall never forget.

As we passed a brook, overshadowed by mighty elms, Dagentree said—

“There is a scene which would have rejoiced the heart of Horace, the huge trees interlacing their arms, while

‘Obliquo laborat
Lympha fugax trepidare rivo.’”

“Horace had a pretty notion of rural quiet and brightness. But, on the whole, it was the taste of a town-bred man, who liked the murmur of the little Bandusian rill, and the sight of the cattle, up to the ankles in water; but had little soul for what we call the picturesque. That is essentially a modern sentiment. Anything approaching the wild or the sub-

lime is always spoken of by the ancients as dreadful. *Horrida dumis*, 'bristling with copse' is the best Virgil will say of the grandest scenery."

"I believe the sense of enjoyment in wild scenery is the child of peace and security. The useful will always have place before the sentimental. The Roman territory had known so little rest, the labours of the husbandman had been so constantly dissipated by internal commotion, that the idea of landscape beauty was always associated with peace and repose. I have read Captain Burt's letters from Scotland, to which Macaulay refers in the first volume of his History. The worthy captain was quartered with General Wade at the base of Ben Nevis in 1719; but the notion that there was anything to admire in those masses of rock and heather never crossed his mind. He tells us that he thought Richmond Hill the model of mountain scenery, and would have given as much to leave the Highlands as modern tourists pay to go there. Still, such scenes, in the breast of any man of finer temperament, cannot fail to stir the fancy, and make the pulse beat higher; but, I suppose, in former days this was reckoned a false and unfashionable sentiment, and found no favour with vulgar readers."

"Like everything else, however, this sort of thing has been overdone. We have used up description ;

and our poets, if we have any, have been driven to mysticism and dreamy analysis of thought, which seems to be considered sublime in proportion to the difficulty of understanding it."

"I agree with you. The 'fine frenzy' of the poet threatens to become downright insanity. Now-a-days, when 'imagination bodies forth the forms of things unseen,' the last thing the bard thinks of doing is to give them 'a local habitation or a name.' He leaves them exactly where he found them, and calls them by no name any one but himself comprehends. Nothing to my mind is true poetry but what all may understand, and that without stopping to think what it means.

"There is certainly a good opening for a genuine manly poet. The Laureate fills his place with power; but even of him it may be said without offence, that he is always greatest when most intelligible. I own a predilection for our simpler and more vigorous school, which Dryden founded, and of which Byron was the most distinguished disciple in this century. One always knows what he means, whether we approve the sentiment or not. Look! there is a covey, well-grown too, for this time of the season."

"What a flutter the whirr of the birds gives one. But nothing to compare to the splash of a trout. Talking of over-doing things, there is one thing we

are over-doing, and that is game. We are spoiling sport, which is much ; and spoiling the farmers' tempers, which is a little ; and building up a dense brick wall between the squires and the people, which is most serious of all. It is stolid folly. The tenantry have a good English love of sport, and a good English hatred of a poacher ; but if these days of Cockney game-preserving go on, both one and the other will disappear.

“ ‘O nut-brown partridges ! O brilliant pheasants !

And O, ye poachers ! 'Tis no sport to peasants.’

“Very true. In the old days of Ponto and Don, when a few brace of partridges, shot over the well-trained favourites, was a good day's sport, for which you had to walk the live-long breezy day, and when you found your reward in appetite and sound sleep, shooting was a recreation worthy of a sportsman. The squire would as soon have thought of selling his children as his game. But now, when pheasants are bred like barn-door fowls, and hares like sheep, and the chief ambition of the preserver is to see in the sporting paper that he and his party killed 1000 head, while the price from the poulterer pays his keepers and his powder and shot, can we wonder he has no sympathy from his tenants ? He has none from me. This is not sport, nor is it sportsmanlike ; any more than standing over the ankles in ice, with

a genial north-wester blowing, as a cock-shy at the end of a cover for an advancing party, is the perfection of comfort or enjoyment. But here we are at Dashwood, and the eagles eye us voraciously."

Our luncheon at Dashwood, where we were simply and cordially welcomed, afforded little which it would be interesting to tell. Lady Dashwood whispered to me that my visit had done Dagentree a great deal of good, for she had never seen him so full of spirits and vivacity. She had plainly no suspicion of the Wendover story; and in discussing the member and his household—for what country circle can avoid talking about their neighbours?—she more than once bordered on delicate and dangerous ground. At last my hermit grew suddenly dumb, at some allusion to the predominance of spectacles in the *menage*; and I thought it better to move, in case a worse thing should happen.

"Why, I wonder," said Dagentree, as we rode down the approach, "did nature bestow tongues on women? and why must they always try to pull a feather out of their sister's plumage?"

"I do not think a peck from the bill of that round good-tempered partridge would do any one harm. She is a very kindly soul." In such condescending terms was I pleased to patronise Lady Dashwood, forgetful of the tremors and bashfulness of three days ago.

"Still I suspect she can raise her little ruff, and swell out her plump wings, when so inclined. But women seldom can speak simply and naturally of each other. Each regards the other as a rival, in disguise or without disguise; and when the little barb of detraction is absent, the void is filled by over-praise."

"You have learned that from books, Dagentree, for you know nothing about them. Wait till you are wiser—till you grow taller and grow gooder, as the negro melody has it."

"I am quite content with my present acquirements. Give John your horse, for this is Riversdale."

We entered by a side gate in the park-wall; and winding our way through some broken ground, covered with ancient copse, out of which a giant of the woods ever and anon raised his gnarled and knotted branches, we emerged on a scene as lovely and magnificent as my eye ever rested on. About two miles off, but apparently in the centre of the park, stood the old Abbey of Riversmere—a princely pile, in which the ecclesiastical style had been admirably adapted to the additions which in successive centuries it had received. The undulating ground, broken into successive mounds of promontories, interlacing each other so as to afford a charming variety of shadow and distance, was covered by trees

of great size and age. Here a huge oak tossed its limbs in the air; there a chestnut swept its foliage along the brilliant sward; and gleaming and glancing through the hollows, disappearing and reappearing, was the bright trout-stream, so dear to my friend. The foreground, lighted by the blazing sun, the middle distance, shading into a mellow and misty blue, hazy, yet clear, and the endless expanse of wood and hill beyond, made me gaze and hold my breath in wonder and delight.

"What a glorious scene!" I said; "not to be rivalled, not to be paralleled anywhere but in England. Nature may do her part in other climes, but this speaks of centuries of wealth and ease. We may malign our island fogs, and denounce our climate, but to them we owe that gorgeous foliage and those emerald slopes. Happy and proud indeed should be the owner of such a domain, with one fair spirit for his minister."

"You think, with Scott, that 'love rules the grove.' I suspect the sovereign of this princely possession is more likely to agree with Byron, that

'Cash rules the grove, and fells it, too, besides.'

The timber will stand a bad chance at his Grace's majority."

"If Lady Dashwood had said that, Timon would have railed at the censoriousness of women."

Dagentree had the grace to blush.

"I must excuse your impertinence, as I am so soon to get rid of it. But how strange the caprices of fortune, that bestow a principality which a Grand Duke would envy, on a brainless, soulless, heartless young donkey."

"That is masculine, I grant you. Good, round, hearty abuse is better than the poisoned needles which so chafed Gulliver. What has his Grace of Glamorganshire done to deserve it?"

"Nothing, except following the instincts which he inherited from the tenth transmitter of his foolish face."

There was a tinge of more bitterness than usual in my friend's tone. Whether the Duke had refused to let him fish, or had made love to Sophia, I never discovered.

'Scamp or no scamp, he has a most splendid heritage. I wish he would give me a day's shooting, which is worth a hundred spent in mooning by a desolate brook.'

'Come down in September, and we shall try what may be done. Are you a good shot, and not a jealous one? for those are two requisites, without which I will not say a word for you.'

'I can shoot, and enjoy my friend's shooting, if that is what you mean.'

“Do you count your shots, and not the contents of the bag? Do you slyly manœuvre for the best place? Do you claim doubtful shots? Do you express yourself figuratively when you miss, or bore the party with explanations of the cause of that national calamity? For if you do any of these things, remain in Pump Court.”

“I cannot plead total innocence; but that is not given to man. On the whole, I think of the spot and of myself.”

Good. A jealous shot is a social infliction of the deepest dye. My dislike of, or at least indifference to, partridge shooting arose from a week's annoyance and disgust caused by two of the irritating tribe, which I never recovered.

“Two years ago I made one of a party who spent a week at an outlying manor on the Riversmere estate in a remote part of the county. We lived in a quaint old manor-house: and one of the duke's guardians did the honour to some eight or ten guests. The men shot, and the ladies sketched and botanized during the day; and all sang, flirted, and played whist at night. It might have been merry enough, even for a recluse like myself, but for two drops of bitterness in our cup of sweets.

“Perhaps a dash of envy mingled with the dislike with which I viewed the two London club-men to

whom I allude. They were of a type peculiarly obnoxious to an unobtrusive man like myself. They were well-bred, well-informed, very much at their ease, and what the world thinks good company, very available in the drawing-room, and tolerable though uncertain shots. Yet I thought them simply detestable. They were so hard, so conventional, so *blasé*, so incredulous of the real or good, so steeped in legends of the fictitious and the evil. They seemed to see nothing in the world but a repulsive mask, used to hide still more repulsive realities. No doubt, they wore one themselves : and it dropped off in the partridge field.

"Colonel A. was large, florid, and fair ; Mr B. was dark, slender, and short. In other respects nature seemed to have constructed their intellects, tastes and habits on exactly the same model : and among other resemblances, each was keen and jealous in his sport. It was a study to see those two well-poised, impassive men behaving like ill-conditioned school-boys over their shots, and watch the little mean intrigues to which they resorted.

"After the first day, during which four of us shot together, we separated into two parties, my companion, at first, being a young undergraduate, full of spirits, and an admirable shot. On the third day this arrangement was changed, for the two worthies had

so quarrelled over their shooting that neither would go out with the other. So the colonel fell to my share, and Mr B. to the Oxford man. Fortunately I was neither a good shot, nor a keen one, and cared very little about my companion's selfishness, excepting as a type of that kind of man: but anything more offensive than his demeanour I never witnessed in my life. He seemed entirely unconscious of my presence, ordered the keeper about as he thought fit, killed my birds right in front of me, and, although I scrupulously refrained from claiming anything which was not palpably mine, wrangled with the keeper about every shot on which a doubt could hang. My companion, the Oxonian, shared the same fate, but declined to bear it with the same philosophy. He was full of chaff and mischief, and being a better shot, and quite as keen on the pastime, gave his London friend as much trouble as he could. Do what he would, however, the practised hand was more than his match, and in the end he was obliged to submit, and content himself with furtive winks at the keeper, when a more audacious claim than usual was advanced.

"After a couple of days' absence, the Oxonian returned, more vivacious and self-assured than before. There was a gleam of suppressed mischief in his eye, which led me to think he was meditating revenge,

although in what form, or what direction the bolt was to fall, I could not surmise.

“‘I say, old fellow,’ he addressed B. on the Sunday evening—‘You shot awful bad on Thursday—I had two for your one—hope you will do better to-morrow.’

“B. looked up from his walnuts. ‘Didn’t miss a shot, as you know.’

“‘Bah! didn’t you? Ask Bob Green—ask the keeper.’

“‘I never count my shots, nor discuss them; but you may, if you like, to-morrow.’

“‘Done for, you old boy. Dagentree will come out and see fair.’

“On the morrow the colonel took his departure in the morning. The day was grim and lowering, and we sallied forth after breakfast with Mr B. for our last day’s shooting. Young Chatterton was in great feather, talking as he always did with great volubility, but with the same malice in his eye I had remarked the day before.

“Whirr went the covey. Bang, bang from Mr B.—no result. Bang from Chatterton—one bird.

“‘Wiped your eye neatly, sir. But perhaps you hit it, and it forgot to fall.’

“‘Hold your row, can’t you?’ growled his companion.

"At the next rise, both guns went off at once, and one bird fell.

"Down before you fired,' said Mr B.

"Hardly,' said the other, and the sport proceeded; Chatterton seldom missing, and B. resolutely and offensively claiming every doubtful bird. I shot little myself, being much amused and a little mystified by the proceedings. I thought I did detect a look of intelligence passing between the keeper and a small but saucy boy, who was carrying a bag, when B. made some palpable miss, or a louder claim than usual.

"The day ended in a deluge of rain, and the party reached home thoroughly drenched. B.'s temper, which had been sadly tried throughout the day, by an unusual number of misses, and an unaccountable self-confidence on the part of his companion, gave way altogether, and he entered the manor-house with hearty imprecations on the weather, the sport, and the whole concern.

"As we followed him, Chatterton gave me a wink of indescribable and undeniable impudence. When we assembled in the drawing-room, we had to wait some time before B. made his appearance; the rest of the party consisting of our host, his wife, and two or three good-looking girls. At length, the door was flung open and B. entered; and the apparition

which met our eyes I shall never forget. His slim figure was encased in the colonel's habiliments ; his nether garments tucked up at the feet, but otherwise in all their natural proportions ; his arms lost in the sleeves of a coat, the folds of which hung in drapery round his shoulders, and his neat feet consigned to a pair of mouldy slippers, in place of the trim boots of which he was so proud. For one moment the circle stood aghast ; for another a twinge of compassion, raised by the rueful visage, kept them silent ; and then the old rafters shook to a peal of laughter such as they had not heard since the days of the Cavaliers.

"B. was a conceited, but not an ill-tempered fellow ; and after a few minutes, recovered his equanimity, and laughed with the rest ; and as if to atone for his humiliating toilette, was more than usually pretentious and arrogant about his shots.

" 'I hope you shot well to-day, Mr B., although you have suffered in the cause,' said one of the young ladies.

" 'Never better in my life. Gave Chatterton there a lesson.'

" 'Eh ! what do you say about me ?' said Chatterton.

" 'He says he gave you a lesson to-day, and taught you how to shoot.'

“ ‘I suspect we shall both recollect to-day’s lessons,’ said Chatterton; and let the subject drop until after the ladies had retired.

“ ‘Well,’ said B., ‘you must own I beat you to-day.’

“ ‘Quite the contrary. You did not kill one shot in four.’

“ ‘I counted them. Out of our thirteen brace, I killed nine and a half.’

“ ‘Out of our thirteen brace, you killed five birds, and no more.’

“ ‘Pooh! I know them all. The first rise I missed; but the second and the third I killed.’

“ ‘Beg your pardon. I killed them. They were both falling before you fired.’

“ ‘A mistake, I assure you. Then the fourth and fifth, at that corner of the wood — those two birds were mine.’

“ ‘They were mine. None of the double shots were yours.’

“ ‘They were all mine. You constantly fired when the bird was falling.’

“ ‘I will prove to you that you are wrong. What shot do you use in your cartridges?’

“ ‘Number 6.’

“ ‘Will you allow me to ring and ask for one of them?’ And, accordingly, Chatterton ordered up

one of B.'s cartridges, and proceeded to dissect it with great gravity. On being opened, not shot, but sawdust poured upon the table.

“There! that is what you have shot with most of to-day; and you see your shooting has been little better than what I always thought it—chaff.”

“Chatterton's gravity, and B.'s fury, were more than I and the host could stand; and although the joke which had been played went somewhat beyond bounds, its ingenuity and success were irresistible. We managed at last to appease the enraged sportsman, who, in spite of his self-sufficiency, had the sense to be amused by the Oxonian's plot, and to accept the rebuff in good part. But the story was told in every house in London to which Chatterton had access; and B. spoke no more about his shots.”

“A well-deserved lesson! I think I have heard the story before. But I can promise you to bring no such discredit on your recommendation. So I trust to your saying a good word for me when the time comes. Does his Grace come down here in the shooting season?”

“Very rarely; and when he does, his associates add little to the society of the neighbourhood.

I wish we saw this vast territory in the hands of some one who would put it to better use. There surely must be something wrong in a system which

so concentrates the land in the hands of one man, and places him under no obligation to use it for the benefit of those beneath him, excepting the beggarly and degrading pittance of the poor-rate."

"What would you do, O second Tiberius Gracchus? Divide Riversmere into £5 allotments? But, alas! the same cause which has led to the accumulation of estates in a few hands would undo your allotments as fast as you made them. As long as the return from money invested in trade is greater than the return from money invested in land, so long will the investment of money in land be the luxury of the rich."

"It is certainly more easy to see the evil than suggest the remedy. Perhaps the way adopted by the old Greeks might succeed—to make the richest citizen pay all the taxes for the year. The next year he was no longer the richest citizen, and another stepped into the unwelcome eminence. In this way, a poor man never paid anything."

"I shall be thankful, when you are Chancellor of the Exchequer, that I am far from that mark. All the vain babble about small holdings is foolish, because the remedy suggested is impossible. The small holdings would always be in the market, and would always be bought up by the men of capital; unless, indeed, you were to prohibit their transfer, which

would reproduce, in the worst of all forms, one of the most mischievous provisions of feudal times. One thing only can be done by legislation, and that is, to educate the people. I should not be sorry to see his Grace of Glamorganshire pretty heavily fined, to ensure every boy on his estate being better educated than himself. But the sun is sloping his westering wheel to Heaven's descent. It is late; and Briggs stands rampant at the door."

CHAPTER XXV.

ENDED.

A WARM farewell, warmer even than my welcome, accompanied my entrance to the railway carriage. Dagentree was sternly blushing at my parting remark, and Briggs stood in the background, hat in hand, looking like a field-marshal on the plains of victory. My visit to my Discontented Cousin was over; and it remains only to gather up the tangled skein of my adventures, and bring these everyday papers to a close.

The Carrington mystery, if mystery it be to any intelligent reader, a few sentences will be sufficient to explain. The detection of it turned on the interview which I had witnessed between the young woman and Sainscroft the day before the burglary. Feeling satisfied that Sainscroft had some hand in the proceeding, I had caused both himself and the young woman to be arrested. His escape for the time deranged my schemes; for the woman would not speak, and I had no evidence against her. On her

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liberation, however, I took steps to have her motions watched, and traced her to America, where for a time I lost all clue to either of them ; but at last a letter which I received from New York induced me to go over to America, where I succeeded in unravelling the whole plot. The girl had quarreled with Sainscroft, and told me all.

It seemed that the next heir to the Carrington property had been greatly chagrined at Mrs Carrington's succession, as she had been long lost sight of, and he had thought himself secure. Some hints dropped as he thought unguardedly, but as I suspect intentionally, by Rendelson, put him on inquiries as to Mrs Carrington's history ; and in the course of these, he came across Silas Sainscroft, as he called himself, who gave him the full particulars of Trench's previous marriage, adding to it the injurious but apocryphal account of the survivance of the first wife, with which he had embittered poor Trench's last years. Sainscroft had offered to come over to this country, and disclose the truth ; and he accordingly left, in company with the woman, who was truly his half-sister, and very like Trench's first wife, with the design of making her personate Mrs Trench. The burglary, however, which Sainscroft planned and executed on his own account, probably to give him some hold on the next heir, disconcerted the plotters ;

and the girl not only confessed her share in the imposture, but put me in the way of recovering the lost deeds.

I found my old and impudent friend at San Francisco, driving, as he said, a most thriving trade in a number of eccentric lines of commerce. At first he utterly denied any knowledge of the burglary, or of the deeds.

"That was a shabby dodge of yours, Mr Pemberton," said he, "to have me put in irons in that fashion. Guess I was too 'cute for the Britishers. Respects to old Briggs when you see him, and ask after his darned shoes."

"Mr Sainscroft, I know the whole story about Mrs Trench, for the Creole girl has told me everything."

"Confound her babbling!" said he. "Suppose she turns out to be the true wife, and not the false one?"

I own I did not like the suggestion.

"Come, Mr Pemberton ; you can't prove anything against me, an' you do your worst. 'Spose we trade a little, and liquor over it."

"What do you propose?" I said.

"Well, I don't kind of propose ; but I put a case, as you lawyers say. Put the case that I am a much sharper fellow than you, and can recover stolen property when you can't. There is nothing wonderful in that, is there?"

"It is possible."

"Put the case that I asked you what you would give me to exert my remarkable talents in that line with success?"

"But put the other case that I got a warrant from New York under the extradition treaty to apprehend Silas Sainscroft."

"Try, and welcome. You must first find Silas; but you will not find him here. Then you must have proof, and you have not a wooden nutmeg's worth. And if you had a hundred warrants, we care nothing for them at the diggings. You are much more likely to find a Californian sod over you, and a bowie-knife sticking between your ribs. Besides, all said, you would not get what you wanted. Best deal, and liquor, as I told you."

I was staggered. The notion of compounding the felony was repugnant to me; but the difficulties were great, and the fellow's coolness indicated that he knew he could defy me.

"I will give two thousand dollars to any one who will restore the deeds, and will bring me satisfactory evidence of the death of the first Mrs Trench."

"Let's liquor, then. No? Then be here at five o'clock, and we shall see what can be done."

At five o'clock I found him sitting outside his log-hut, smoking with great serenity.

"I am a man of honour, I am," said he; "but here is what you want."

He handed me a packet of papers, very neatly made up, and I perceived at once that it contained the missing deeds. One document, however, was to me worth all the rest. It was a certificate from the parish clerk of Louisville, Mass., of the death of Hester Rochefort, wife of Henry Trench, on the 27th August 1855.

"How do I know that this is what I want?" said I.

"You must chance that."

"How came you to have it so handy?"

"My friend can tell you—Not I. I am only an agent, stranger. But mayhap it was to work the old one."

"After proving the reverse—eh!"

A furtive glance was the only response.

I paid him the two thousand dollars; and returned to England with my prize, having first verified the certificate by inquiry at Louisville.

One thing staggered me. Sainscroft positively denied that he ever travelled with Rendelson in his life. But in the year 1866, among many other wrecks and crashes, that potentate also came to grief and disappeared, and I have heard surmises that lead me to think that my experience in the train was not

merely a warning vision, but was a sober and solid fact.

Meanwhile, dear and drowsy reader, farewell. I shall never visit my Discontented Cousin again ; for the winter of his discontent has been made perennial summer by Sophia Dagentree, who rules over the terraces, and has thrown the Elzevirs into the shade. Should you ever visit the unnamed scenes I have described, Eustace Carrington will be glad to welcome you at Bonthron, for Pemberton, as well as his Discontented Cousin, is no more.

THE END.

[SEPTEMBER 1870.]

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